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AUTHOR	Mulholland, Lori A.
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ABSTRACT

This report describes an evaluation of charter schools in Arizona. Eighty-two charter schools representing the 137 charter-school holders in the state participated in the study. The schools were selected to be representative of all state charter schools with regard to location, population density, grade level, and sponsoring agency. A total of 303 parents of charter-school students, 171 students, 123 teachers, and 54 directors completed surveys about charter schools. Fourteen focus groups were held around the state, and individual interviews were conducted with 23 persons. Student-achievement test data for charter schools, charter-school applications, other state databases, and parent complaints were also reviewed. The findings indicate that the key reasons that students transfer to charter schools are that they were not doing well academically and/or were not happy at their former school. Parents of charter-school students and the students themselves were more satisfied with their academic performance, and student-achievement data appear to indicate that charter-school students were achieving academic gains at levels similar to students attending regular public schools. Common concerns of stakeholders include accountability for student achievement, implementation of special-education requirements, and qualifications of school teachers and directors. Recommendations for addressing concerns of participant groups are offered. (RJM)

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ED 429 339

Morrison Institute for Public Policy
School of Public Affairs ■ College of Public Programs
Arizona State University

Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation

Prepared by
Lori A. Mulholland

for the
Arizona Department of Education

March 1999

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Summary
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation

This study was conducted as a progress evaluation of charter schools in Arizona. The study was funded by the Arizona Department of Education and conducted during calendar year 1998 by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy (School of Public Affairs) at Arizona State University.

Eighty-two charter schools representing the 137 charter holders participated in the study. The 82 schools were selected to be representative of all charter schools in the state with regard to location, population density, grade level and sponsoring agency.

A total of 303 parents of charter school students, 171 students, 123 teachers and 54 directors completed surveys about charter schools. Fourteen focus groups were held around the state with parents, students, teachers and directors. Individual interviews were conducted with 23 persons, most of whom either hold policy-making positions related to charter schools or are employed by professional organizations that interact frequently with the schools.

In addition to these methods, Morrison Institute researchers analyzed Stanford 9 student achievement test data for charter schools, examined charter school applications and other state databases and reports for specific information, and reviewed parent complaint files held by the two state level sponsoring boards and ADE. The Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation includes three exhibits of additional work conducted for this study. These exhibits consist of individual profiles of each charter school in the study, an analysis of school policies that hold participants accountable for student achievement, and a benchmarking model for Arizona charter schools.

Major findings from the study are listed below.

- Key reasons that students transfer to charter schools are that they were not doing well academically and/or they were not happy at their former school.
- Parents of charter school students and the students themselves are much more satisfied with the academic performance and attitudes of the students at their charter schools than at their former schools.
- Student achievement data (as measured by Stanford Achievement Test - 9 for 1997 and 1998), appear to indicate–in a preliminary way–that charter school students are achieving similar academic gains to students attending regular public schools. However, an experimentally controlled research study over a longer period of time is needed to adequately understand achievement group differences and trends.
- Parents and students consider the teachers at charter schools to be their best feature compared to the students' former schools. Other charter school features rated highly by both groups include school size, class size, attitude toward students and attitude toward parents.
- Common concerns of parents, students and school personnel include funding for building and campus improvements, lack of sports and other extracurricular activities, transferability of charter school credits, and implementation of special education requirements.
- Common concerns of other stakeholders in charter schools include accountability for student achievement, implementation of special education requirements, and qualifications of charter school teachers and directors.

Several recommendations for addressing the concerns of participant groups are offered in the full report. It must be noted that the Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation is the first such study of charter schools to be conducted on behalf of ADE. While the findings and recommendations presented here are important, it is equally important to recognize that some findings raise more questions than they answer. There is clearly a need for further longitudinal research into Arizona charter schools.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction 1
- Charter Schools in Arizona 1

2 Evaluation Method 3
- Sample Selection 3
- Participants 4
- Instruments 4
- Procedures 5
- Review of Parent Complaint Files 5
- Analysis of Student Achievement Data 6
- Profiles 7
- Benchmarking 8

3 Parent and Student Data 9
- Parent Data 9
  - Parent Selection of School 9
  - Parent Perceptions of Satisfaction 11
  - Parent Concerns and Complaints 13
- Student Data 15
  - Student Selection of School 15
  - Student Satisfaction with School 16
  - Student Concerns and Complaints 18

4 Teacher, Director, and Other Stakeholder Data 19
- Teacher Data 19
  - Teacher Selection of School 19
  - Teacher Perceptions of Satisfaction 20
  - Teacher Concerns 22
- Director Data 22
  - Director Perceptions of Satisfaction 22
  - Director Concerns 24
- Information from Other Stakeholders 25
- Accountability 25
- Achievement 26
- Special Education 26
- Equity and Choice 26
- Funding and Facilities 27
- Qualifications of Teachers and Directors 27
- Governance 28

5 **Student Achievement Data** 29
Data Analysis 29
Results of Analysis of Gain in NCE 29
Reading 29
Lanugage 29
Mathematics 31
Results of an Analysis of Raw NCE Scores 31
Reading 32
Lanugage 32
Mathematics 32

6 **Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations** 37
Discussion 37
Parents and Students 37
Student Achievement Data 39
Teachers and Directors 40
Other Stakeholders 40
Conclusions 41
Recommendations 41

Appendices 45
A: List of Interviewees
B: Surveys
C: Focus Group Protocols
D: Interview Protocols
E: Definitions—Parental Concern Categories
F: Normal Curve Equivalent—Conversion Table

Tables

Table		
2.1	Characteristics of charter schools in the sample vs. total population	4
2.2	Surveys distributed and returned by respondent group	4
2.3	Student SAT 9 Matching Rates from 1997 to 1998	6
3.1	Parents—What were the reasons you decided to move your child from their former school to this charter school?	9
3.2	Parents—What features first attracted you to this charter school?	10
3.3	Parents—When you decided to seek options for your child's education, what kinds of schools did you explore?	10
3.4	Parents—How did you find out about the school your child attends?	10
3.5	Parents—When you looked into charter schools, what steps did you take?	11
3.6	Parents—Perceptions of child's performance and attitudes compared to previous school	11
3.7	Parents—Was anything about this charter school better, worse or different than what you expected?	12
3.8	Parent involvement and communication with charter school	12
3.9	Parents—Will you be sending your child to this school next year?	13
3.10	Parents—If your child will not be going to this school next year, what type of educational environment do you plan to send him/her to?	13
3.11	Parents—Did any of the following items concern you or continue to concern you regarding charter schools in general or this charter school specifically?	14
3.12	Percentages of parent complaints and concerns in complaint files	14
3.13	Percentage of parent complaints by year according to year charter began operating	15
3.14	Students—I wanted to go to this school because...	15
3.15	Students—I was not happy at my old school because...	15
3.16	Students—Perceptions of performance and attitudes compared to previous school	16
3.17	School features liked and not liked about charter school	17
3.18	Students—Do you think you will go back to this charter school next year?	17
3.19	Students—If you are going to another school next year, what type of school will you probably attend?	17
4.1	Teachers—How did you find out about your teaching job at this charter school?	19
4.2	Teachers—What features of this charter school attracted you?	20
4.3	Teachers—What professional features of this school made it attractive to you?	20
4.4	Which school features and which professional features are better or worse than you initially expected?	21
4.5	Teachers—Do you intend to continue teaching at this school?	21
4.6	Teachers—How would parents rate this school compared to their child's previous school in terms of:	21
4.7	Teachers—Do any of the following items about charter schools concern you or did they concern you when you took this job?	22
4.8	Directors—How would parents rate this school compared to their child's previous school in terms of:	23
4.9	Participant ratings of student and parent satisfaction with the charter school compared to former school	24
4.10	Directors—Do any of the following items about charter schools concern you or did they concern you when you took this job?	24
4.11	Directors—Please describe three of the most significant difficulties you have faced in running your charter school	25

Figures

Figures		
5.1	Average Change in Reading by Grade and Type	30
5.2	Average Change in Language Achievement by Grade and Type	30
5.3	Average Change in Math Achievement by Grade and Type	31
5.4	Change in Reading NCE Score by Grade and Group	33
5.5	Change in Language NCE Score by Grade and Group	34
5.6	Change in Math NCE Score by Grade and Group	35

— 1 —
Introduction

The Arizona legislature enacted Senate bill 2002 in 1994, making Arizona the tenth state to have a charter school law. Today, five years later, 34 states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws. Nevertheless, more charter schools have been created in Arizona than in any other state. At this time, according to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), there are 192 charters held in Arizona representing a total of 273 sites. These schools are attended by approximately 33,000 students. The number of charter school sites in Arizona equals 24 percent of our nation's total.

In the fall of 1997, ADE issued a Project Proposal Request to Arizona public universities to conduct a progress evaluation of Arizona's charter schools. Through a competitive bidding process, ADE awarded the contract for the progress evaluation to the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University in December 1997. This document is Morrison Institute's final report on the progress evaluation.

A charter school study team was organized in January 1998 to participate in the evaluation design process for the study. The team consisted of the Director of Charter School administration for ADE, the ADE contract officer for the study, the Executive Director of the State Board for Charter Schools, and the Director of Charter Schools for the Arizona State Board of Education. The study team met regularly during the early stages of the project to review the evaluation design and data-collection instruments and to participate with Morrison Institute staff members in planning evaluation activities.

This final report on the Charter School Progress Evaluation is accompanied by a second document containing three exhibits of other work performed under the same contract. Exhibit A, Charter School Profiles, contains descriptive information on each charter school included in this study. Exhibit B, Charter School Policies on Accountability, consists of an analysis of language from charter school applications and discussion. Exhibit C, Benchmarking, presents a benchmarking system that could be implemented with charter schools in Arizona to establish and measure progress toward goals that are appropriate for their individual programs and populations.

A basic understanding of charter schools in Arizona should help readers of this report to comprehend the issues and topics discussed in it. For that reason, a brief description of Arizona charter schools is presented below to conclude this Introduction section. Subsequent sections describe the evaluation method for the study, report the data collected from the participants, and discuss the results and present the conclusions and recommendations derived from them.

Charter Schools in Arizona

The Arizona charter school law permits any group or individual to propose a charter school to any of the three potential charter sponsors: the State Board of Education, the newly created State Board for Charter Schools (referred to herein as the Charter School Board), or any Arizona school district. The two state-level sponsors can sponsor up to 25 charters each per year, and there is no annual limit on the number of district-sponsored charters that can be created. A charter agreement is good for a term of 15 years with a review every five years. A charter can be revoked for not keeping the terms of the charter or for other good reason.

Once approved, charter schools become independent legal entities, although district-sponsored schools may remain under the district.

Arizona charter schools are free from most state education code, including state teacher certification. They are not free from health, safety, and non-discrimination laws. They also must continue to participate in the state testing program, offer a comprehensive program of instruction and must meet the state prescribed high school graduation requirements. As public schools, they are required to admit all students who apply and, if space is limited, they must use an equitable selection process such as a lottery.

Charter schools are funded directly by the state. They receive the state per pupil operating revenue, approximately $4,500 per year. The capital side of charter school funding consists of about $380 per pupil subsequent to the passage of the Arizona Students First Capital Finance reform package which excluded charter schools from building standards and the revised capital funding for regular public schools. Previous to Students First, state-level sponsored charters received some capital outlay and levy, and $174 per pupil per year for transportation whether they provided it or not. The legislature revised the funding formula to simplify the process and eliminate funding issues related to transportation. Charters can apply for state and federal categorical program funding.

As is the case with charter schools everywhere, Arizona charter schools are extremely diverse. They are generally small, most with student enrollments of under 200 students. Class sizes are generally smaller than in regular public schools as well. Over 60% of charter schools are located in the state's two largest urban centers, Phoenix and Tucson.

The kinds of programs that charter schools offer are also diverse. About 40% of the charter schools in Arizona are geared toward students who have previously been unsuccessful in school. The majority of charter high schools fall into this category. Other charters have a particular subject focus, such as the arts or science and technology. Some charter schools are based on a particular educational philosophy or method, such as Montessori or a back-to-basics program. Arizona allows private schools to convert to charter status and many have done so. Such schools can no longer charge tuition to parents and must agree to admit all students.

— 2 —
Evaluation Method

The Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation utilized multiple research methods to obtain data. Surveys and focus groups were conducted with charter school participants (parents, students, teachers, and directors). Interviews were conducted with individuals who have some connection with charter schools. Stanford 9 student achievement data for charter schools were analyzed, as were a number of documents, including charter school applications, parent complaint files held by the two state level boards and ADE, and various state databases and reports.

Sample Selection

As specified in the Project Proposal Request, Morrison Institute researchers developed a stratified and geographically representative sample design that identified sufficient charter schools for this study to adequately represent the charter schools in Arizona.

A geographic/population density variable was used to stratify the state-level sponsored schools for inclusion in the sample. Over half the charters in the state are located in the two large urban areas of metropolitan Phoenix and Tucson. Therefore, the countries with the two largest urban centers, Maricopa and Pima, were considered to have high density. The rest of the state was divided into northern rural and southern rural counties as shown below:

High density counties:	Maricopa, Pima
Northern rural counties:	Apache, Coconino, Gila, La Paz, Mohave, Navaho, Yavapai
Southern rural counties:	Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yuma

Charters were randomly selected within the categories shown above in approximately the same percentages as they are represented in the total population of charter schools, with the exception that all district-sponsored charter schools and all tribal charter schools were included in the sample because of the small number of these schools. Only one school was selected to represent each multi-site charter (*i.e.*, a charter holder operating schools at more than one site), and that school was selected from the county in which the charter holder operated the most schools. The charter school study team reviewed and approved the evaluation design prior to its implementation.

At the time the study began (January 1998), there were 223 total operating charter school sites representing 137 separate charters. The 137 charters were considered as the total population of charters for the study. The number of schools in the sample and their characteristics compared to the population of charter schools in Arizona are shown in Table 2.1.

The table shows that the sample included 82 charter schools from the population of 137 charters operating in Arizona on January 1, 1998. It can also be seen that the sample is very similar to the population of charter schools in Arizona on the characteristics shown in the table. The total number of charter school sites in the sample dropped by 12 toward the end of the study (11 sites closed from one charter holder). However, because the total number of charters held by the sample schools only dropped by two, the characteristics shown in Table 2.1 were not altered and some data are still reported at most of the sites that closed, as they finished out the 1997-98 school year.

Table 2.1
Characteristics of charter schools in the sample vs. total population

	Sample	Population (as of 1/98)
Number of charter schools: (excluding individual sites of multi-site charters)	82	137
Geography:		
located in rural north	30%	27%
located in rural south	12%	9%
located in high density counties	58%	64%
Grade levels:		
elementary	19%	21%
elementary/middle	25%	22%
middle schools	4%	3%
elementary/middle/secondary combinations	22%	23%
secondary schools	30%	30%
Sponsor:		
State Board of Education	30%	32%
State Board of Charter Schools	43%	50%
Districts	27%	16%
Year Sponsored:		
1995	27%	31%
1996	43%	40%
1997	30%	28%
Multi-site charters	29%	26%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Participants

Participants in the study varied in number and selection process with the type of data that were collected. For the survey data, schools were selected to be representative with regard to the characteristics in Table 2.1. The total number of participants to which each type of survey was distributed and the number who returned completed surveys are shown in Table 2.2.

A total of 14 focus groups were held at various sites around the state, 10 of which were held for English-speaking participants and four for Spanish-speaking parents and students. Focus groups for adults included directors and teachers, who were recruited directly by Morrison Institute staff, and parents who were recruited by the school directors. Focus groups for students included only students attending the school where the focus group was held. Focus group sizes ranged from 5 to 12. Morrison Institute staff conducted all focus groups, and a bilingual (Spanish-English) staff member conducted the meetings for Spanish-speaking participants.

Table 2.2
Surveys distributed and returned by respondent group

Group	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	Return Rate
Parents	960	303	32%
Students	585	171	29%
Teachers	246	123	50%
Directors	82	54	66%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Individual interviews were held with 23 people, most of whom hold responsible positions in which they have contact with charter schools and/or responsibilities related to them. The participants who were interviewed and their employment affiliations are shown in Appendix A.

Instruments

Draft versions of four surveys were developed by Morrison staff members: one each for parents, students, teachers and directors. Each draft survey was reviewed by the charter school study team. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of each survey.

Each survey contained a set of items dealing with demographic information about the respondent. Parents, students and teachers also answered sets of questions about why and how they chose a charter school, their satisfaction with the school, and things that they liked and did not like about it. Parents, teachers and directors were asked to indicate their concerns about their charter schools. Directors were also asked several questions about the school itself. A copy of each of the four surveys is contained in Appendix B.

Focus group protocols were developed for parent, student, teacher and director focus groups. Each protocol consisted of 9 to 12 questions. The questions generally dealt with topics similar to those covered on the surveys. The focus group protocols may be found in Appendix C.

Two personal interview forms were also developed, one for individuals who work in community organizations that interact with charter schools and the second one for other stakeholders who have responsibilities or special interests related to charter schools. These forms, which are located in Appendix D, contained questions about the role of the interviewee's organization related to charter schools and about the interviewee's opinions of charter schools.

Procedures

Schools that were selected for the study were sent a letter signed by Lisa Graham Keegan, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Kenneth Bennett, President of the State Board of Education; and Douglas Pike, President of the State Board for Charter Schools. The letter asked the schools to cooperate with the evaluation activities and described the scope of the study and the capacities in which each school would be asked to participate. The letter was followed up with phone calls by Morrison Institute researchers to verify its receipt and to discuss any questions or concerns school directors might have about participation.

For distribution of the surveys to parents and students, schools were selected to be proportionate to the geographic/density variable. School selections were made to ensure diversity in grade level, school size, year chartered, and program focus. The evaluators recruited participants by contacting the school director and suggesting a grade level or classroom to survey. Substitutions were made in a few cases when the director indicated possible problems with the suggested level.

The school director was asked to provide the numbers of English and Spanish surveys needed. In April, Morrison Institute sent the school a package containing the appropriate number of surveys in sealed envelopes. The envelopes also contained a cover letter and a pre-addressed stamped return envelope. The school generated mailing labels for the parents, attached the labels, and mailed the sealed envelopes to parents.

Also in April, student surveys were sent to the parents' attention through the school director. This mailing contained parent and student consent forms to be returned with the surveys.

For the teacher and director surveys, the director of each charter school in the study received a package containing a cover letter explaining the contents of the package and a director survey. Depending on school size, the package also contained two to four teacher surveys, each with a letter and pre-addressed stamped return envelope. Half the directors were instructed to distribute surveys to the teachers whose names were first in the alphabet, and the other half were instructed to distribute them to teachers whose names were at the end of the alphabet. To increase response rates, the evaluators and ADE personnel made follow-up calls to the schools.

Focus groups were conducted with parents, students, teachers, and directors at sites around the state. A member of the Morrison Institute evaluation team acted as facilitator for the sessions, which lasted about two hours. The focus group sessions were audio taped for later transcription.

The individual interviews were arranged by telephone with the interviewees. Interviews were conducted in person unless the interviewees lived out of state or well outside the Phoenix area. The interviews were audio taped for later transcription.

Review of Parent Complaint Files

Morrison Institute researchers reviewed the charter school complaint files held by the two state boards and the files held by ADE on behalf of district-sponsored schools. Files of all operating

charter schools were reviewed, not just those included in the study sample. Records consisted of letters from parents, inter-office memos regarding parent-raised concerns, and other documentation pertaining to parental issues, such as legal papers. Where multiple issues of concern were raised within one piece of correspondence or other documentation, each concern was noted separately.

A total of 222 documents regarding parent concerns were reviewed representing 373 individual items of concern. Researchers initially reviewed the same documents for purposes of inter-rater reliability.

After researchers became familiar with the types of concerns, categories were developed to classify each concern. Concerns were classified according to the substance of the complaint, and the number of concerns in each category was recorded. Definitions of the categories are located in Appendix E.

Analysis of Student Achievement Data

In order to conduct an analysis of achievement in charter schools, students' scores on the reading, language, and math sections of the *Stanford Achievement Test*, Ninth Edition (SAT 9), were utilized. This nationally standardized, norm-referenced achievement test is the only instrument at this time that has been administered to all Arizona students which permits any kind of statistical comparison. Students were compared to themselves in an statistical analysis of SAT 9 scores for the Spring 1997 and 1998 test administrations. Each student record indicated whether students were tested in regular public schools or charter schools during Spring 1997 and 1998. Although the focus of the analysis is the charter school students' test scores, other regular public school student test scores were also used for comparison purposes.

To link student scores, ADE personnel conducted exhaustive SAT 9 record matching based on the combination of name, ethnicity, and date of birth. ADE reported that within districts participating in a field test, approximately 80 to 85% of the students that were in the districts both years were appropriately identified as the same. One advantage of using this matching process for the analysis is that students were matched from year to year, regardless of their mobility within the state. Such an analysis, however, limits the results to those students who remained enrolled in Arizona schools for two consecutive years, took the SAT 9, and coded their demographic information with sufficient similarity from year to year. Groups most likely to be effected by this approach include students with limited English proficiency who take another test such as the Spanish version of the SAT 9 (the Aprenda), students who do not use a single formal name or are unaware of their ethnicity, and students in classes where the test administration does not follow the directions given by ADE.

Data files from ADE included 4,344 students who were identified as enrolled in charter schools in 1997 and 1998, 1518 who were enrolled in charters in 1997 only, and 4,796 who were enrolled in charter schools only in 1998. These numbers represent approximately 39% of the total enrollment in charter schools in 1997 and 34% of the enrollment in 1998. The table below shows the match rate of students from 1997 to 1998 by grade and charter school status.

Table 2.3
Student SAT 9 Matching Rates from 1997 to 1998

Grade in 1997	Charter	Non-Charter
3	66%	85%
4	59%	83%
5	60%	81%
6	55%	80%
7	65%	87%
8	44%	79%
9	31%	74%
10	32%	73%
11	31%	74%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

As this table shows, match rates for students enrolled in charter schools in 1997 vary from 55%

to 66% in elementary school and stay at or below 32% in high schools. Matching for regular public schools, on the other hand, remain above 80% in elementary schools and between 73% and 74% in high schools. Clearly, the proportion of students used to describe charter high schools is markedly below what we would hope for and caution needs to be used when making inferences about this group. This match rate may reflect high mobility or drop out rates among special populations of youth targeted by some charter schools.

In selecting an appropriate scale to use in this analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of various scores were considered. Standardized scores are preferred in measuring growth over time because they more accurately match the underlying achievement. Standardized scores are spaced equally along the achievement continuum, so that equal changes along standardized scores reflect equal changes in achievement. One such score, the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) was used for this analysis. Although most people are more familiar with percentile ranks, NCEs are a more appropriate measure to use to analyze growth over time because the distance between NCEs are constant and can, therefore, be added and averaged.

Because NCEs have a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 21.06, they are often confused with percentile ranks. The two are not equivalent, but NCEs can be converted back to percentiles. A conversion table is shown in Appendix F which permits the reader to make these transformations.

The analysis conducted with the data available first involved grouping students. Student scores were categorized by their "continuity" in charters. These groupings consisted of: 1) students tested in charters both in 1997 and 1998; 2) students in charters in 1997 but in regular public schools in 1998; 3) students in regular public schools in 1997 but in charters in 1998; 4) students never in charters (*i.e.*, in regular public schools in 1997 and 1998).

Means were calculated for each of the four groups at each test administration as well as growth in NCE scores between the two years for all grades and for each of the three test batteries. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to determine whether the group differences were significant or likely to be due to random fluctuation. These results are graphed and are shown in Chapter 5.

Important Note: It is critical to understand that the analyses described here are purely descriptive. However, these descriptions provide an important starting point for future discussions of student academic progress in charter schools. Important aspects of student differences have not been controlled for by experimental manipulation (*e.g.*, control groups) or statistical manipulation (*e.g.*, covariance) in this analysis. Thus, statements of causality cannot be made. For example, in cases where children in charters have higher test scores than other children, the work of charter schools alone cannot be unequivocally seen as the source of the difference.

In addition, the fact that only two years of data are available for analysis further limits our ability to detect true trends and patterns. There are a few variations that are discussed as patterns, but they are preliminary and warrant further research. The data presented provide a baseline for future data analysis regarding student achievement.

Profiles

The profiles for each charter school in the study include the following specific elements as described in the ADE proposal request.

- The chartering body
- Grade levels served
- Any curricular emphasis, learning philosophy or subject area focus
- Qualifications of the instructional staff
- Demographics of the student population

Many additional characteristics of each charter school are also included in the profiles.

Morrison Institute staff obtained the information in the school profiles from the sources listed below.

- The ADE School Report Card database
- The October 1, 1997 school enrollment report
- The ADE charter school office
- Charter school applications
- The surveys sent to the charter school directors

Benchmarking

The Project Proposal Request required the development of a benchmarking system and associated metrics that would allow for the longitudinal evaluation of charter schools. ADE believed that this method of evaluation would be most appropriate for charter schools because of their unique missions and goals and the various populations which they serve.

Evaluators conducted a comprehensive literature review for examples of public sector benchmarking prior to developing the Arizona Charter School Benchmarking System. Only performance domains and indicators are proposed in the benchmarking system because a true benchmarking system must be developed in collaboration with the individuals who will be implementing and using it.

— 3 —
Parent and Student Data

The parents of charter school students and the students themselves are generally considered to be the primary consumers of the educational opportunities offered by charter schools. Data were collected from these two groups using surveys and focus groups. The parent and student data essentially addressed the following questions:

- Why did you choose a charter school?
- What was involved in making the choice?
- How satisfied are you with the school?
- What are your concerns about the school?

The data related to these questions are reported below, first for parents and then for students.

Parent Data

The parent data are organized into three topic areas: parent selection of school, which deals with the issues of why parents chose a charter school and what was involved in making the choice; parent perceptions of satisfaction with the school; and parent concerns and complaints about the school.

Parent Selection of School

This section reports data from questions on the parent survey dealing with why parents chose a charter school for their child and what factors were involved in making their choice.

Table 3.1 shows the 10 reasons selected most frequently by parents for moving their child to a charter school and the percentage of parents who selected each reason.

Table 3.1
Parents—What were the reasons you decided to move your child from their former school to this charter school? (Check all that apply)

%	Reason
34%	Class sizes were too large
32%	Child was bored or under-challenged
29%	Negative social environment/interactions with classmates
29%	Teachers/staff at former school were not able/willing to help my child
28%	Child was doing poorly academically
28%	Child's self-esteem was low at former school
27%	Child was unhappy at former school
20%	Nothing wrong at former school, this school better met my child's needs
20%	Concern for child's safety
16%	Former school was too large

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

It can be seen from the table that the single reason selected most frequently by parents (34% of respondents) for moving their child to a charter school was large class sizes at the former school. The most dominant general set of factors, however, relate to the child's academic performance and personal satisfaction at the former school. Five reasons dealing with academic performance and personal satisfaction (child bored or underchallenged, negative social environment/interaction with classmates, child doing poorly academically, child's self-esteem low, child unhappy at school) were among the top seven selected by parents for moving their child to a charter school.

Table 3.2 lists the 10 choices selected most frequently by parents as features that first attracted them to their child's charter school.

Table 3.2
Parents—What features first attracted you to this charter school? (Check all that apply.)

%	Feature
69%	Education program/curriculum
69%	Teaching methods
64%	Class size
62%	Philosophy of education
53%	Academic expectations of students
52%	School's attitude toward students
50%	Safe environment
48%	Quality of teachers
47%	School size
36%	School's attitude toward parents

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Table 3.2 reveals that the two features selected most frequently by parents as attracting them to their child's charter school were the school's education program/curriculum and its teaching methods, both of which were chosen by 69% of the parents who completed the survey. Class size, which was the reason chosen most frequently by parents for moving their child to a charter school, was ranked third by parents (64%) as a feature that first attracted them to the school. The school's academic expectations of students and its attitude toward students, which are features that would appear to address parent reasons for moving their child related to the child's academic performance and personal satisfaction, were selected by 53% and 52% of the parents respectively.

Table 3.3 shows the kinds of schools that parents considered when they sought an initial school or an alternative to a former school for their child's education.

It can be seen from Table 3.3 that the option investigated most frequently by parents (46%) was one charter school—the school that they had selected. Other frequently explored options were regular public schools (reported by 44% of parents), private schools (35%), more than one charter school (26%),and home schools (23%). Most parents reported that they had explored several options before they chose their child's charter school.

Table 3.3
Parents—When you decided to seek options for your child's education, what kinds of schools did you explore? (Check all that apply.)

%	Type of school
46%	One charter school—the one we chose
44%	Regular public schools
35%	Private schools
26%	Charter schools—more than one
23%	Home schooling
16%	Parochial schools

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The sources from which parents found out about their child's charter school are shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4
Parents—How did you find out about the school your child attends? (Check all that apply.)

%	Found out about school from:
53%	A friend/relative/neighbor
22%	The school's reputation
13%	Newspaper/TV/radio
11%	Staff at former school
7%	Driving/walking by
7%	Flyer or mailing

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The table reveals that more than half of the parents (53%) who completed the survey learned of their child's charter school from a friend, relative or neighbor. Twenty-two percent learned of the school because of its reputation and 13% learned of it from the newspaper, television or radio.

Table 3.5 shows the steps that parents took when they looked into charter schools.

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Table 3.5
Parents—When you looked into charter schools, what steps did you take? (Check all that apply.)

%	Steps taken
72%	Called or picked up information at school
50%	Asked friends/neighbors about the school's reputation
48%	Interviewed principal/director
46%	Met the teachers
41%	Toured the school
27%	Observed a class in session
15%	Looked for test scores or other information to compare the school

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

It can be seen from the table that the most common step, reported by 72% of the parents, was to call the school or pick up information at it. Fifty percent of the parents indicated that they asked friends or neighbors about the school, 48% interviewed the principal or director, and 46% met one or more teachers.

Focus group data yielded additional information about the reasons that parents chose charter schools. Factors related to school size and class size were noted often, as they were on the parent survey. Several parents described the potential for students to become more involved and to develop leadership skills more easily in a smaller school. One parent commented:

> *"My son was asked to give the senior speech, and if he were in public school, I don't think that ever would have happened."*

Parents remarked that students are less anonymous in charter schools and that their problems are noticed and addressed more quickly. Some parents also reported that the smaller size of charter schools enables them to be more flexible and allows the parents to be more involved in school affairs.

Charter schools were seen as schools of last resort by some parents. Many parents in focus groups had children who had been unsuccessful in regular public schools. Some of these children had had problems because of learning difficulties or other diagnosed special needs, while others with high ability had been under-challenged in regular schools. Some parents said that their child had been expelled from a regular public school and that the charter school was the best alternative available to them.

Parent Perceptions of Satisfaction

Parents were asked several questions on the parent survey dealing with their perceptions of their child's performance and attitudes at that school and with the parents' own interactions with the school. This section summarizes parents' responses to these questions.

Table 3.6 shows parents' perceptions regarding their child's performance and attitudes at their charter school compared to their previous school.

Table 3.6
Parents—Perceptions of child's performance and attitudes compared to previous school.

Item	a lot better	a little better	about the same	a little worse	a lot worse
How is your child doing academically at this school compared to previous school?	55%	24%	14%	6%	1%
How is your child's attitude toward school/learning compared to previous school?	60%	17%	17%	5%	1%
How does your child feel about his/her teachers compared to previous school?	58%	15%	21%	5%	1%
How does your child like his/her classmates compared to previous school?	39%	24%	35%	2%	0%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Table 3.6 reveals that 79% of the parents reported that their child was doing either "a lot

better" (55%) or "a little better" (24%) on academic performance at the charter school compared to his/her previous school. In contrast, only 7% reported that their child was doing "a lot worse" or "a little worse" academically at the charter school. Parent responses to other questions indicated that the child's attitude toward school/learning was "a lot better" or "a little better" (77% total) at the charter school, that their child felt better about the teachers (73% total), and that the child liked his/her classmates better (63% total) at the charter school. The combined responses for "a lot worse" and "a little worse" totaled 6% or below for each of these three items.

Table 3.7 shows the 10 features selected most often by parents as being better about their child's charter school than the parents had expected.

Table 3.7
Parents—Was anything about this charter school better, worse or different than what you expected? (Check all that apply.)

School Feature	Better	Worse	Different
Quality of teachers	53%	7%	6%
Educational philosophy	51%	3%	5%
Teaching methods	51%	6%	5%
Education program/curriculum	49%	4%	8%
Academic expectations	48%	4%	5%
School size	42%	3%	3%
Class size	42%	5%	9%
Attitude toward parents	41%	5%	5%
Attitude toward students	41%	5%	5%
Safe environment	40%	8%	3%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The table reveals that "Quality of teachers" was selected by the most parents (53%) as being better than expected at the charter school. The school's educational philosophy and its teaching methods were selected as better than expected by 51% of the parents, its educational programs/ curriculum by 49%, and its academic expectations for students by 48%. Attitude toward parents and attitude toward students were both selected as better than expected by 41% of the parents.

Only two features about their child's charter school were selected by more than 10% of the parents as being worse than expected. "Type of students" was selected as better than expected by 29% of parents and worse than expected by 15%. Discipline/dress code was chosen as better than expected by 34%, and worse than expected by 12%.

Parents were asked several questions about their involvement and communication with their child's charter school. Their responses to these questions are summarized in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8
Parent involvement and communication with charter school

Item: Compared to your child's previous school, do you feel that you have more, the same or less of each of the following?	More	Less	Same
Communication with the school	67%	8%	25%
Opportunities to be involved	70%	0%	30%
Being treated as a valued member of the school community	68%	0%	32%
Input into decisions made	65%	9%	26%
Item: Compared to your child's previous school, how would you rate the following?	**Better**	**Worse**	**Same**
The school's attempts to communicate with parents	69%	7%	24%
The school's response to me when I have a problem	70%	4%	26%
The front office staff treatment of me when I come to school	59%	5%	36%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

It can be seen from Table 3.8 that parent responses were positive to both sets of items in the table. For the first set of items, 65% to 70% of parents responded more positively toward the charter school than toward their child's previous school across the four items (communication with the school, opportunities to be involved, being

treated as a valued member of the school community, and input into decisions made). In contrast, fewer than 10% of the parents responded less positively toward the charter school than toward the former school on each of the four items.

On the second set of items in Table 3.8, from 59% to 70% of the parents rated the charter school as better than their child's previous school across the three items. No more than 7% rated the charter school as worse than the child's previous school on any of the items.

Table 3.9 shows the parents' plans regarding whether their child will return to the same charter school next year.

Table 3.9
Parents—Will you be sending your child to this school next year?

%	Response selected
73%	Yes
9%	No—grade level not available or graduating or moving
5%	No—not meeting our needs
13%	Not sure
When adjusted for those who cannot return due to grade level availability, graduation, moving:	
80%	Planning to return
6%	Not planning to return
14%	Unsure

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The table reveals that 73% of the parents reported that they will be sending their child to the same school next year, 9% will not because the next grade level is not available or because their child is graduating or moving, 5% will not because the charter school is not meeting their needs, and 13% are unsure. When these numbers are adjusted for students who cannot return because the next grade level is not available at the school or because they are moving, 80% of parents plan for their child to return, 6% do not, and 14% are unsure.

Parents who were not planning to send their child to the same charter school next year were asked about the type of school to which they planned to send the child. Their responses are summarized in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10
Parents—If your child will not be going to this school next year, what type of educational environment do you plan to send him/her to?

%	Response selected
41%	A regular public school
21%	Another charter school
9%	Parochial school
4%	Home school
4%	Private school
20%	Undecided

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

It can be seen from Table 3.10 that, of the parents whose child will not return to their charter school next year, 41% plan to send their child to a regular public school. Twenty-one percent of these parents reported that they plan to send their child to another charter school, and 20% were undecided about where to send their child. Lower numbers were reported for parochial school (9%), home school (4%) and private school (4%).

Parent Concerns and Complaints

Data on parent concerns and complaints came from three sources: the parent survey, the parent focus groups, and the review by Morrison Institute personnel of the charter school complaint files of ADE and the two state boards. The data on concerns and complaints from these sources are reported in this section.

Table 3.11 lists the continuing concerns and initial concerns checked by parents on the parent survey.

Table 3.11
Parents—Did any of the following items concern you or continue to concern you regarding charter schools in general or this charter school specifically? (Check all that apply.)

Concern	Continuing concern	Initial concern
Funding for building or campus improvements	38%	14%
Operational funding for the school	37%	16%
Lack of sports or extracurricular programs	37%	15%
Transportation for students	24%	25%
School facility—building/property	19%	22%
Faculty turnover	18%	17%
Leadership of the school	13%	14%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The table shows that funding for building or campus improvements (selected by 38% of parents), operational funding for the school (37%) and lack of sports or extracurricular programs (37%) were selected most often by parents as continuing concerns from among the potential concerns listed on the survey. Moreover, it can be seen from the table that each of these three concerns was selected as a continuing concern by more than double the percentage of parents who indicated that it was a concern initially. In contrast, the percentage of parents who indicated that an item was an initial concern and the percentage who indicated it was a continuing concern was quite stable for each of the other four items in the table.

Information from the parent focus groups indicated that many parents were concerned about the acceptance of credits earned in a charter school by regular public schools and about the value of a charter school diploma for college admission and scholarship purposes. A few parents told stories of lost credits or semesters when their child transferred from a charter school to a regular public school, and some believed that credits earned at charter schools were never transferable to the regular public school system. Some parents also expressed concern in the focus groups about lack of advanced classes in charter schools. One parent reported:

> *"We lost a full scholarship at NAU because... he couldn't get math classes, so I just don't know what we're going to do. We thought he was already qualified for the scholarship and now we find out he is lacking math and foreign language. The school is having a hard time getting the information from the colleges. It is just so different from the rest of the system and the schools just don't know how to handle it yet."*

The complaints and concerns in a total of 222 documents from the charter school complaint files of ADE and the two state boards were carefully examined by Morrison Institute. The complaints or concerns for each document were recorded and categorized by the topic area of the complaint. Table 3.12 shows the percentage of complaints and concerns from parents for each topic area that had more than 5% of the total number.

Table 3.12
Percentages of parent complaints and concerns in complaint files

%	Complaint/Concern
24%	Staff/administration/governance issues
21%	Communications/expectations
11%	Policy
10%	Special education
8%	Public school practices
8%	Money/business practices
6%	Academics

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Table 3.12 reveals that issues related to staff, administration and governance were the subject of 24% of the parents' complaints and issues related to communications and expectations were the subject of 21% of the complaints. Although concerns related to funding were selected most

frequently by parents on the parent survey, money and business practices were the subject of only 8% of the parents' complaints and concerns from the complaint files.

Table 3.13 shows the analysis of complaints according to both the year charter schools began operating and by year of complaint. While there are only four years of data available for the "oldest" charters (for schools chartered in 1995), from this analysis it appears that there may be a pattern emerging regarding to proportion of complaints. The first year of operations has a lower proportion than the second year, which looks considerably higher than the third year. This analysis can only be considered preliminary because of the limited length of time schools have been in operation and the data available for the schools. It is interesting, nevertheless.

Table 3.13
Percentage of parent complaints by year according to year charter began operating

Year of complaint	schools chartered in 1995		schools chartered in 1996		schools chartered in 1997	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1995	34	14%				
1996	99	42%	28	30%		
1997	56	24%	40	43%	10	27%
1998	49	21%	24	26%	27	73%
Total	238	100%	92	100%	37	100%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy 1999

* % may not add up to 100 due to rounding

Student Data

Similar to the parent data, the data collected from students also dealt with selection of the charter school, satisfaction with the school, and concerns about it. Each of these topics is addressed in this section on student data.

Student Selection of School

The student questionnaire contained two items dealing with reasons for choosing the charter school and for being unhappy with the student's former school. The data for the item on choosing the charter school are reported in Table 3.14.

Table 3.14
Students—I wanted to go to this school because... (Check all that apply.)

%	Reason
58%	This charter school had a special program I liked.
21%	My friends go to this school.
15%	I have other family members who go to this school.
6%	We moved to a new neighborhood.

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The table reveals that 58% of the students reported that they wanted to attend the charter school because it had a special program they liked. Many students also indicated that they wanted to attend the charter school because their friends go to it (21%) or because they have other family members who go to it (15%).

Table 3.15 reports each reason chosen by 20% or more of the charter school students for being unhappy with their former school.

Table 3.15
Students—I was not happy at my old school because...

%	Reason
38%	Teachers couldn't help me when I needed it.
36%	I wasn't doing well in my classes.
32%	I was bored.
29%	My classes had too many students.
23%	I didn't like the other students or get along with them.
22%	My old school was too big.
20%	My old school was not safe.

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Table 3.15 shows that the two reasons selected most often by students for not being happy with their former school were "Teachers couldn't help

me when I needed it" (38%) and "I wasn't doing well in my classes" (36%). Three of the top five reasons related to the students' academic performance and personal satisfaction (not doing well in classes, bored, didn't like other students or get along with them). Interestingly, the five reasons selected most frequently by students were essentially the same five reasons, though not in the exact order, as the five chosen most often by parents (shown in Table 3.1) for moving their child from their former school.

Student Satisfaction with School

Students were asked to respond to several questions on the student survey dealing with their academic performance and attitudes at their charter school, features that they like and dislike about the school, whether they think that they will return to the school next year and, if not, what type of school they think they will attend. This section addresses student responses to these questions.

Table 3.16 reports student perceptions of their academic performance and their attitudes in their charter school compared to their former school.

Table 3.16
Students—Perceptions of performance and attitudes compared to previous school

Item	a lot better	a little better	about the same	a little worse	a lot worse
How are you doing in your classes compared to your last school?	67%	16%	11%	5%	1%
How do you feel about going to school compared to your last school?	53%	20%	20%	5%	1%
How do you like your teachers compared to your last school?	62%	15%	17%	5%	1%
How do you like the other students compared to your last school?	41%	23%	30%	4%	2%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

It can be seen from Table 3.16 that 67% of the students think that they are doing a lot better and 16% a little better than in their former school. In contrast, only 5% think that they are doing a little worse and 1% a lot worse than in their former school. Fifty-three percent of students feel a lot better and 23% a little better about going to their charter school than their former school, whereas only 5% feel a little worse and 1% a lot worse. Students also reported that they like their teachers considerably better (62% a lot better and 15% a little better) and the other students better (41% a lot better and 23% a little better) at the charter school than at their former school.

Students were asked to describe how they feel about a total of 21 different features of their school by choosing among three responses for each feature: I like this, I do not like this, OK or no opinion. Their responses are shown in Table 3.17 in the "Features liked" section for all features liked by 50% or more of the students and in the "Features not liked" section for all features marked by more students as "not liked" than as "liked."

Table 3.17 reveals that the school features liked by the most students were the teachers (76%), how the school treats their family (75%), the schedule or hours (73%), and the principal or director (73%). Sixteen of the total of 21 features on the survey item were liked by 50% or more of the students, whereas only three features were not liked by more students than liked them. The three features which a greater number of students marked as "not liked" than as "liked," as shown at the bottom of the table, were playground/ recreation areas (not liked by 39% of students), where we eat—cafeteria (not liked by 37%), and sports or other activities (not liked by 29%).

Table 3.17
School features liked and not liked about charter school

Features liked	I like this	I don't like this	OK/No opinion
My teachers	76%	4%	20%
How the school treats my family	75%	2%	23%
The schedule or hours	73%	6%	21%
The principal or director	73%	9%	18%
Number of students in class	71%	2%	27%
What students are expected to learn	71%	3%	26%
How the school treats students	71%	5%	24%
Safety of the school	70%	6%	24%
What is taught—the subjects	69%	2%	29%
Number of students in school	67%	4%	29%
How we learn things	67%	5%	28%
How we are graded	65%	5%	30%
The dress code	55%	23%	22%
Transportation to school	53%	17%	30%
The students at the school	52%	3%	45%
The school building	50%	16%	34%
Features not liked	**I like this**	**I don't like this**	**OK/No opinion**
Sports or other activities	28%	29%	43%
Where we eat—cafeteria	32%	37%	31%
Playground/recreation areas	24%	39%	37%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Charter school students were also asked whether they think they will go back to their school next year. Table 3.18 shows their responses.

It can be seen from Table 3.18 that 62% of the students reported that they think they will return to their charter school next year, 18% do not plan to return because the next grade level is not available or because they are graduating or moving, 7% do not plan to return for another reason, and 13% are unsure. When these numbers are adjusted to exclude the students who cannot return due to lack of grade-level availability or other factors, 76% of the students plan to return, 8% do not, and 16% are unsure. As might be expected, these percentages are similar to those reported earlier for parents, who indicated that 80% planned for their child to return to their charter school, 6% did not, and 14% were unsure.

Table 3.18
Students—Do you think you will go back to this charter school next year?

%	Response selected
62%	Yes
18%	No—grade not taught here or graduating or moving
7%	No—other reason
13%	Not sure
	When adjusted for those who cannot return due to grade level availability, graduation, moving:
76%	Planning to return
8%	Not planning to return
16%	Unsure

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Finally, students were asked what type of school they were likely to attend if they were going to another school next year. Their responses are reported in Table 3.19.

Table 3.19
Students—If you are going to another school next year, what type of school will you probably attend?

%	Response selected
50%	A regular public school
17%	Another charter school
6%	Home school
3%	Parochial school
3%	Private school
21%	Not sure

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The table shows that 50% of the charter school students who do not plan to attend their current charter school next year think that they are likely to attend a regular public school. Seventeen percent think that they will attend another charter school, and 22% are undecided. The other selections by students were home school (6%), parochial school (3%) and private school (3%).

Student Concerns and Complaints

Students were asked in their focus groups what they liked least about their charter school and what one thing they would change about the school. Like parents, many students also were concerned about transferring credits from charter schools to regular public schools. A few students shared the belief expressed by some parents that credits could not be transferred from a charter school to a regular public school. When asked whether any students planned on changing schools the following year, one student replied,

> *"No, because you can't. These credits— they don't accept them at any regular school."*

Some students were also concerned about the lack of extracurricular activities. Comments like the ones below from two students were not unusual.

> *"One good thing about public schools is the other activities. Some colleges look for that."*
> *"We need groups, clubs, like drama. Other high schools have classes like dance, band, music. Here we just have P.E. and computers."*

A final set of student concerns related to the inadequacy of certain facilities. Those mentioned several times in the student focus groups included sports facilities, the cafeteria or other eating site, and a playground or recreation area. These concerns paralleled the "Features not liked" by students reported earlier in Table 3.17.

— 4 —
Teacher, Director, and Other Stakeholder Data

Whereas parents and students are the primary consumers of the services offered by charter schools, teachers and directors are the providers of these services. Thus, they view the schools from a somewhat different perspective, often more as insiders at a school. Other stakeholders in charter schools, such as state legislators and education association officers, may provide a broader view about charter schools and their function in our school system than individuals involved with only a single school.

Data were collected from both charter school teachers and directors using surveys and focus groups, much as was the case with charter school parents and students. The information from other stakeholders was obtained through individual interviews with the stakeholders conducted by Morrison Institute personnel. The teacher and director data generally dealt with similar topics and questions (selection of school, satisfaction and concerns) as the parent and student data. The interviews with other stakeholders mostly yielded information about the stakeholders' opinions and concerns related to charter schools.

Teacher Data

The data collected from teachers related to their own selection of a charter school for a teaching position, their satisfaction with the school and their perceptions of parents' satisfaction with it, and their concerns about the school.

Teacher Selection of School

Table 4.1 shows the most common ways that teachers learned of their job at the charter school and the person or persons who recruited them for the job.

The table reveals that the most common ways that the teachers learned about the availability of their job were by reading a newspaper advertisement about the job (28%) and by hearing about the job possibility or the charter school from a colleague (26%). Teachers also were asked to indicate one of more individuals who recruited them for their teaching position at the charter school. Seventy-three percent reported that they were recruited for their job by the charter school director and 51% reported being recruited by a teacher at the charter school.

Table 4.1
Teachers—How did you find out about your teaching job at this charter school?

%	I sought the job out
28%	Read a newspaper ad
26%	Learned of it from a colleague
18%	Approached the school director
%	**I was recruited by**
73%	The school director
51%	A teacher at the school

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show school features (Table 4.2) and professional features (Table 4.3) of the charter school that were reported by more than 40% of the teachers as having attracted them.

It can be seen from Table 4.2 that three school features (class size, philosophy of education, and teaching methods) were selected by more than 70% of teachers as having attracted them to the charter school. Three more school features shown in Table 4.2 (school size, school attitudes toward students and education program/curriculum) were chosen by 60% or more of the teachers.

Table 4.2
Teachers—What features of this charter school attracted you? (Check all that apply.)

%	School Features
73%	Class size
73%	Philosophy of education
71%	Teaching methods
61%	School size
61%	School attitude toward students
60%	Education program/curriculum
53%	Academic expectations of students
50%	Safe environment
48%	Quality of teachers
43%	Discipline or dress code
43%	Type of students

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Table 4.3 shows that a supportive school administration (60%), potential for greater autonomy in classroom decisions (59%), and opportunity for greater responsibility/growth (59%) were the professional features chosen most often by teachers as having attracted them to their school. Regardless of what features attracted teachers to charter schools, it is interesting to note that the teacher survey indicates only 24% of teachers were specifically looking for a charter school teaching position at the time they were job hunting.

In focus groups, teachers most frequently described some form of freedom as a key reason for seeking out charter schools. Teachers mentioned freedom from regulations, freedom to make decisions and freedom to take risks. These statements by two teachers are representative of the comments of those who felt that they had more freedom in their charter school environments.

> *"...now when I take a look at my curriculum, I ensure that it meets what the state asks for, and I have the freedom to do it any way I want to do it. Whatever way is most successful. That is really a plus for charter schools."*

Table 4.3
Teachers—What professional features of this school made it attractive to you? (Check all that apply.)

%	Professional Features
60%	Supportive administration
59%	Potential for greater autonomy in classroom decisions
59%	Opportunity for greater responsibility/growth
57%	Comfortable environment
55%	Participation in school decision-making/ governance
47%	Opportunities to collaborate with other staff
47%	Opportunities to collaborate with other staff
38%	Freedom from district regulations

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

> *"I have much more freedom than I had as part of other schools I worked at. I like the small classes. I don't like the lack of resources, but it also kind of makes you scrap and be creative and try something different."*

Teacher Perceptions of Satisfaction

Table 4.4 shows all school features and all professional features listed by more than 5% of the teachers as being either better than they initially expected or worse than they initially expected.

The table reveals that six school features and six professional features were listed as better than initially expected by more than 5% of the charter school teachers. Quality of teachers, which was rated better than initially expected by 13% of the teachers, was the top-ranked school feature. A supportive administration, also rated better than initially expected by 13% of teachers, was the top-ranked professional feature. Second-ranked features were the school's philosophy of education (8%) as a school feature and participation in decision-making (9%) as a professional feature.

It can also be seen from Table 4.4 that 12 features in the table were listed by charter school teachers as better than expected and only two as worse than expected. The two features listed more frequently as worse than expected were type of students (6%

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worse, 5% better) and teacher salaries (7% worse, 3% better).

Table 4.4
Which school features and which professional features are better or worse than you initially expected? (List all that apply.)

School feature	Better	Worse
Quality of teachers	13%	0%
Philosophy of education	8%	2%
Education program/curriculum	7%	1%
Attitude toward students	7%	2%
Class size	7%	3%
Discipline/dress code	7%	5%
Type of students	5%	6%
Professional feature	**Better**	**Worse**
Supportive administration	13%	5%
Participation in decision-making	9%	2%
Opportunity for responsibility/growth	8%	1%
Comfortable environment	8%	2%
Potential for more classroom autonomy	7%	2%
Opportunity to collaborate with staff	6%	2%
Salaries	3%	7%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

As one indicator of their satisfaction at the charter school, teachers were asked if they intend to continue teaching at their school. Their responses are shown in Table 4.5. The table shows that 45% of the teachers responded that they intend to continue at their charter school indefinitely and 40% indicated that they intended to continue for a few more years. Only 3% reported that they did not plan to continue at their school.

Table 4.5
Teachers—Do you intend to continue teaching at this school?

45%	Yes, indefinitely
40%	Yes, a few more years
3%	No
12%	Undecided

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Teachers were asked how parents would compare their child's charter school to his/her previous school on several criteria. The teacher responses to these items are summarized in Table 4.6

Table 4.6
Teachers—How would parents rate this school compared to their child's previous school in terms of:

Item	much better	a little better	the same	a little worse	a lot worse
Their child's academic performance	66%	25%	6%	3%	0%
Their child's attitude toward school/learning	70%	19%	9%	2%	0%
Their child's feelings about the teachers	65%	23%	11%	1%	0%
Their child's feelings about classmates	50%	31%	19%	0%	0%
Item	**more**	**same**	**less**		
Their opportunities to be involved	63%	25%	12%		
Their input into decisions made	66%	29%	5%		
Their communication with the school	76%	21%	3%		
Being treated as valued member of school community	80%	16%	4%		

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The data for the top set of four items in Table 4.6 reveal that teachers believe parents would rate their child's charter school much more favorably than his/her former school on all four items (academic performance, attitude toward school, feelings about teachers, feelings about classmates). The combined percentage of teachers who chose either "much better" or "a little better" was above 80% on each of the four items, while the combined percentage who chose "a little worse" or "a lot worse" was below 5% on each of the items.

The data for the bottom set of four items in the table indicate that teachers also believe that parents have more involvement with their child's

charter school than with his/her former school. Eighty percent of teachers indicated that they believe parents have a stronger feeling of being treated as a valuable member of the school community at the charter school. Teacher responses were also positive with regard to parent opportunities to be involved (63%), input into decisions made (66%), and communication with the school (76%).

Teacher Concerns

The primary source for identifying teacher concerns about their charter school was an item on the teacher survey which asked teachers to indicate their concerns when they took their charter school job and their current concerns. The data for this item are reported in Table 4.7 for all current or initial concerns selected by 20% or more of the teachers.

Table 4.7
Teachers—Do any of the following items about charter schools concern you or did they concern you when you took this job?

Concern	Current	Initial
Sports/extracurricular activities for students	32%	15%
State support of charter school idea	32%	17%
Public support of the charter idea	32%	20%
Funding for building/campus improvements	30%	21%
Salary	27%	15%
Implementation of special education	26%	12%
Faculty turnover	26%	19%
Operational funding for the school	26%	29%
The school facility—building/property	24%	20%
Burnout	21%	7%
Leadership of the school	20%	13%
Sustainability of the school	14%	34%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Table 4.7 shows that the three most common current concerns of teachers, all of which were selected by 32% of the respondents, were sports/extracurricular activities for students, state support of the charter school idea, and public support of the charter school idea. Funding for building/campus improvements (30%) and salaries (27%) were the fourth-ranked and fifth-ranked current concerns chosen by teachers.

The table also reveals that 10 of the 12 items listed were chosen more frequently as current concerns by teachers than as initial concerns. that is, teacher concern about these items is greater now that it was initially. A notable exception to this pattern is concern about sustainability of the school, which at 34% was the most common initial concern but was a current concern of only 14% of the teachers.

Director Data

The data collected from directors dealt primarily with their perceptions of parents' satisfaction with their child's charter school and with the directors' concerns about charter schools. These data are reported below.

Director Perceptions of Satisfaction

Although administrators were not questioned directly as to their own satisfaction with charters for this study, the topic came up spontaneously in focus groups. The most prominent theme that emerged in these discussions was the difference that creating and maintaining a clear unique vision makes. This belief is illustrated in the comment of one director who had previously been a teacher and principal in the regular public schools.

> *"I have the ability to stand in front of a group of parents and say, 'this is who we are. If it doesn't meet your needs, then you need to look elsewhere.' At the district I had to stand in front of people and say, 'whatever you want we are that or we will become that.' And, therefore, we were nothing. Every value system and belief and every radical notion had to fit within that and be OK. 'Here at my charter school, we're bright orange, and if bright orange doesn't fit your life, then this is not a good school for you because*

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choice is what brought you in and choice should take you to a better school for your child.'"

The directors' responses to questions about how parents would rate their charter school compared to the child's former school are summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8
Directors—How would parents rate this school compared to their child's previous school in terms of:

Item	much better	a little better	the same	a little worse	a lot worse
Their child's academic performance	76%	20%	4%	0%	0%
Their child's attitude toward school/learning	76%	20%	4%	0%	0%
Their child's feelings about the teachers	69%	25%	6%	0%	0%
Their child's feelings about classmates	47%	33%	20%	0%	0%
Item	**more**	**same**	**less**		
Their opportunities to be involved	67%	20%	13%		
Their input into decisions made	66%	34%	0%		
Their communications with the school	82%	18%	0%		
Being treated as a valued member of school/community	89%	11%	0%		

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The data for the first four items in Table 4.8 reveal that charter school directors believe that parents would rate their child's charter school much higher than his/her former school. The combined number of "much better" and "a little better" responses was 96% for each of the first two items: academic performance and attitude toward school/learning. The lowest rated of the top four items was "feelings about their classmates," which still was rated as "much better" or "a little better" by 80% of the charter school directors. None of the first four items received any rating of "a little worse" or "much worse."

Directors also believed that parents would rate their child's charter school highly on the bottom set of four items in Table 4.8. Directors felt very strongly (89%) that parents believe they are treated as a more valued member of the school community in their child's charter school than in his/her previous school. Their positive ratings about parents' beliefs ranged from 66% to 82% on the other three items dealing with parent involvement and communication with the charter school.

The data from teachers and directors on how parents would rate their child's charter school provides an interesting comparison with how parents and the students themselves rated the school. These data are reported in Table 4.9, with the two positive categories ("a lot better" and "a little better") collapsed into one category and the two negative categories ("a lot worse" and "a little worse") collapsed into one.

It can be seen from the table that students and parents, as reported earlier, had similar ratings to each other on all four items and rated each item quite positively. Compared to students' and parents' ratings, however, teachers' and directors' ratings were even more positive. On academic performance, for example, 83% of students and 79% of parents rated it to be a lot or a little better, and 6% of students and 7% of parents rated it a lot or a little worse. In comparison, 91% of teachers and 96% of directors rated academic performance to be a lot or a little better, and only 3% of teachers and 0% of directors rated it a lot or a little worse. This pattern is consistent across all four items in the table.

Table 4.9
Participant ratings of student and parent satisfaction with charter school compared to former school

Rating Group	Area: Attitude toward school/learning A lot or a little better	A lot or a little worse	About the Same
Students	83%	6%	11%
Parents	79%	7%	14%
Teachers	91%	3%	6%
Directors	96%	0%	4%
Rating Group	**Area: Academic performance** **A lot or a little better**	**A lot or a little worse**	**About the Same**
Students	73%	6%	20%
Parents	77%	6%	17%
Teachers	89%	2%	9%
Directors	96%	0%	4%
Rating Group	**Area: Feelings about teachers** **A lot or a little better**	**A lot or a little worse**	**About the Same**
Students	77%	6%	17%
Parents	73%	6%	21%
Teachers	88%	1%	11%
Directors	94%	0%	6%
Rating Group	**Area: Feelings about classmates** **A lot or a little better**	**A lot or a little worse**	**About the Same**
Students	64%	6%	30%
Parents	63%	2%	35%
Teachers	81%	0%	19%
Directors	80%	0%	20%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Director Concerns

The directors indicated their concerns about charter schools on the director survey as well as in focus groups and interviews with Morrison Institute staff members.

Directors were asked to indicate on the director survey the items that concerned them about their charter schools when they took their charter school job and the items that currently concern them. The items selected as either a current concern or an initial concern by more than 20% of the directors are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10
Directors—Do any of the following items about charter schools concern you or did they concern you when you took this job?

Concern	Current	Initial
Funding for building/campus improvements	33%	13%
The school facility—building/property	32%	19%
Sports/extracurricular activities for students	28%	4%
Burnout	24%	13%
Salary	22%	19%
Implementation of special education	15%	24%
Sustainability of the school	11%	28%
Leadership of the school	7%	20%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

The table reveals that the three concerns selected most often by charter school directors were funding for building/campus improvements (33%), the school facility—building/property (32%), and sports/extracurricular activities for students (28%). Other items selected by more than 20% of the directors as current concerns were burnout (24%) and salaries (22%). As shown in the table, the three items selected as initial concerns by 20% or more of the directors (implementation of special education, sustainability of the school, leadership of the school) were chosen as current concerns by well below 20% of the respondents.

Charter school directors were also asked to describe the most significant difficulties they have faced in running their charter school. Their responses to this item are summarized in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11
Directors—Please describe three of the most significant difficulties you have faced in running your charter school.

%	Difficulty
22%	Funding issues
15%	Staffing or administration issues
15%	Facilities/zoning or expansion issues
9%	Paperwork/reporting requirements
9%	Public perceptions of charters/community relations
6%	Special education
5%	Concerns about students

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy–1999

Table 4.11 shows all difficulties in running their charter school that were described by 5% or more of the directors. It can be seen that funding issues were listed by the most directors (22%) as a difficulty in running their school. Staffing or administration issues (15%) and facilities/zoning or expansion issues (15%) were listed next most often as difficulties in running the school.

Several concerns were also reported by directors in focus groups and interviews. The cost of operating a special education program was one common concern. One director summarized this concern with the following comment:

> *"That is the fear that we all sort of have, that we will get some children whose needs will be more than we can afford."*

Cooperative hiring arrangements are being considered by some directors as one way to defray cost.

Financial issues were once again a matter of concern. It was noted that some charter schools have experienced difficulties in trying to borrow funds from lending institutions. Some directors cited other issues, including accountability for student achievement and transferability of credits earned at charter schools, as important concerns.

Information from Other Stakeholders

Cooperative hiring arrangements are being considered by some directors as one way to defray costs. Information from stakeholders in charter schools, other than the consumers and providers of their services, was gathered from individual interviews conducted with the stakeholders by Morrison Institute researchers (Refer to Appendix A for a list of individuals interviewed). In addition to providing other information, stakeholders related their concerns about charter schools. The stakeholder concerns were categorized by Morrison staff into seven topic areas:

- Accountability
- Achievement
- Special Education
- Equity and Choice
- Funding and Facilities
- Qualifications of Teachers and Directors
- Governance

Each of these seven areas of concern is discussed below.

Accountability

Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that charter schools do not have sufficient accountability procedures in place as they relate to student achievement. Several also recommended improving the quality of information available to parents about school performance. There was some agreement among stakeholders that the Arizona Department of Education has a role in holding charter schools accountable for performance. One state legislator remarked:

> *"I kind of look on information as being a lot more important a function of government agencies than a lot of the regulating and monitoring that they do. This may be one thing that at least should be contracted for by the Department."*

The fact that the charter school law does not prohibit school districts from sponsoring schools outside of their borders was noted as a barrier to accountability by some stakeholders. This view

was often followed by comments about oversight being compromised by distance and the belief that the primary motivation for districts to sponsor out-of-district charter schools are monetary. Not all stakeholders felt that strong accountability measures should be imposed on charter schools, however. Some cited ways that charters are already accountable, such as through report cards, annual reports to sponsors, and other reporting requirements. In defense of charter schools, a state legislator expressed the belief that regular public schools have not been held accountable when he commented:

> *"It's not charter schools in South Phoenix that have 70% dropout rates and go on. Why do these regular schools still receive funding to go on?"*

The market-based idea that people will vote with their feet suggests that some charter schools may lose public support and be forced to close if student achievement is poor or ethical practices are questionable. However, some stakeholders noted that that has not happened so far, even in the small number of problem cases that have occurred. These stakeholders raised doubts that charter schools will be closed due to poor performance.

Achievement

Improving student achievement is a primary goal of Arizona's charter school law. The issues of accountability and student achievement go hand-in-hand, of course, because the amount of improvement in student achievement is often considered to be the key indicator of a school's accountability. As yet, however, there have been no carefully designed general analyses or school-by-school analyses of student achievement in charter schools. Indeed, highly credible comparisons of achievement between charter school students and regular public school students are difficult and costly to perform for several reasons.

Many stakeholders interviewed for this study expressed concerns about student achievement in charter schools. Several interviewees either had strong positive or strong negative opinions about student achievement in the schools. The more common concern, though, was with the need for better information about student achievement in charter schools. Most stakeholders seemed to believe that strong evidence was not yet available on this issue.

Special Education

Special education in charter schools raised concerns for a number of stakeholders, just as it did for charter school teachers and directors. When interviewed about special education in charter schools, an attorney at the Center for Disability Law reported that about 20% of the approximately 1000 calls the Center received from parents in the past year regarding special education violations or concerns were about charter schools. This is a relatively high percentage given charter school enrollments.

Stakeholders who are knowledgeable about special education and charter schools cited three important issues: lack of awareness by many charter school administrators of their legal responsibility to provide special education, inability or unwillingness to provide services as required by law, and efforts to dissuade parents from enrolling their special education students. One special education advocate stated that initially the latter violation was quite apparent, but that now it has taken the form of more subtle dissuasion of parents.

Equity and Choice

Stakeholders raised concerns related to equity in charter schools. Since there is a lack of demographic data for charter schools, it is difficult to determine the representativeness or comparability of charter school students to the regular public school population. However, a few stakeholders noted that most charter schools do not offer free meals or free transportation to students, which may limit attendance by low-income students.

Stakeholders also noted that charter schools with a specific mission or emphasis may limit their student population by intent and/or by self-selection on the part of parents and students.

Examples of such schools would be schools with an arts emphasis or a particular educational philosophy. A few stakeholders said that exclusion of students in such cases may be subtle, perhaps just the feeling that students are not wanted unless they have a particular talent or their parents ascribe to a particular pedagogical belief. Other stakeholders and some school directors noted the benefits of being able to select and pursue a mission, as well as the importance of communicating that mission to parents in order to minimize turnover.

Funding and Facilities

A variety of issues related to funding and facilities were raised by charter school stakeholders during this study. The general perception of stakeholders was that charters operate on limited budgets and that tight finances impact facilities, staff salaries, and program offerings.

Charter schools have increased opportunities for collaboration with community-based organizations and city agencies, such as libraries and parks. In some cases, such partnerships have benefitted charter schools through facility-sharing with such groups as Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCA. At the same time, they have increased demands for many community and city services. Libraries, for example, are heavily affected by frequent visits from charter school students, who most often do not have substantial libraries at their schools. As charters continue to grow in number and continue to use public libraries as their primary source of additional reference material, librarians have expressed some concern that the libraries may not be able to keep up with new demand.

Stakeholders noted barriers related to funding. For example, while it is becoming easier for charter schools to borrow money, borrowing at a commercial rate of interest is prohibitive. The change in the law that lengthened the life of a charter to 15 years—in order to facilitate loan approvals—was also viewed by some as creating problems for accountability, despite the five year review process in place. The wisdom of spending a large percentage of charter school budgets on leased property, with no hope for return on investment, was questioned by various stakeholders.

Several stakeholders relayed concerns over the financial problems at some charter schools and the effect this has on public perceptions of charters. The fact that a few charters have been closed for serious financial problems or malfeasance—events that are well-covered by the media—was reported as having negative repercussions on all charter schools leading to eroded public support.

Long-term funding and facilities issues were also raised by stakeholders. State-sponsored schools are funded entirely at the state level, and as more and more charters gain sponsorship, what was originally a small budget item grows. Furthermore, many stakeholders were concerned about the fact that land purchased with public funds for school property belongs to the charter holder due to a 1996 change in the law. This change enables charters to keep property acquired through the charter school. If a school goes out of business or converts to a private school, the property is legally the charter holder's.

Finally, stakeholders described the facilities charter schools can afford as creating some problems. Often, facilities are not initially well suited for school operations and require extensive and costly renovations. Some stakeholders questioned whether certain of these facilities are safe or accessible to disabled persons. The recent exemption of charter schools from the state facility standards, intended to provide them with flexibility, was described as a potential long term liability.

Qualifications of Teachers and Directors

Some stakeholders raised questions and concerns about the qualifications of charter school teachers and administrators. Responses to the teacher survey revealed that 20% of the respondents did not have a teaching certificate from Arizona or any other state. Survey data also indicated that 20% of charter school teachers have no prior teaching experience and 33% of charter school

directors have no prior school administration experience. One state legislator remarked that it is odd that educational reform efforts are focusing on higher standards for teachers, yet charter schools are not. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the charter school boards should take a role in ensuring that administrators and teachers in charter schools have the training and skills to operate the schools successfully.

Governance

One set of concerns from stakeholders centered around governance issues. By law, charter schools can use any form of governance they choose. Most charter school board members are not elected, but instead are appointed by the school operators. Several stakeholders felt that this process serves the interests of the school operators better than those of the parents and students. There was considerable sentiment among stakeholders for a more democratic process that involves parents in the election of school governing boards.

Another governance issue raised by stakeholders related to the development of school policies and procedures. One state association official reported that the most common complaint she received from charter school teachers was a lack of due process. She commented that,

> *"Very few charter schools I've seen had all their policies developed or even were aware of responsibilities they had in terms of special education or discipline or due process. They just didn't know or just disregard it."*

— 5 —
Student Achievement Data

Improving student achievement is a central purpose of charter schools in Arizona. Thus, an analysis of student achievement in Arizona charter schools as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 9) (see Evaluation Methods section), was conducted. This analysis was based on data from Arizona charter schools and regular public schools during the spring of 1997 and 1998 and provides the first systematic examination of Arizona charter school student achievement.

Data Analysis

What follows is a description of each analysis followed by the results. The possible interpretations and implications of the analyses are described in Chapter 6.

For this analysis, student records were grouped according to the type of school (charter or regular public) attended in both 1997 and 1998. Four groupings were created:

1) students in charter schools in 1997 and regular public schools in 1998;
2) students in regular public schools in 1997 and charter schools in 1998;
3) students in charter schools both in 1997 and 1998;
4) students in regular public schools in both 1997 and 1998 (*i.e.*, "never" in a charter school)

First, each group's average NCE score was calculated at each grade for the reading, language, and mathematics batteries of the SAT 9 from 1997 to 1998. Gain scores from 1997 to 1998 were then calculated on each battery for each grade level transition. Next, a series of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) computations were conducted to assess the degree to which differences in group average gains are considered statistically significant or likely to be due to simple random fluctuation. Figures 5.1 to 5.3 show results for reading, language, and math. The tables use the following codes to describe the four groups described above: 1) 97 Only; 2) 98 Only; 3) 97 and 98; 4) Never.

Results of Analysis of Gain in NCE

The results of this analysis reveal a few patterns for the different groups, but there is little consistency among subject areas or grade levels. Furthermore, few of the differences are statistically significant, but each significant difference is described below.

Reading

The 1997 charter group consistently made greater gains than other groups at the elementary level, and the 1998 charter group typically showed the lowest gain. However, the gains were not large and were not consistent. The 97 charter group had statistically larger growth than regular public school group at grades 4 to 5. The two-year charter group had statistically larger growth than the regular public school group and the 98 charter group at the 8 to 9 transition and the 9 to 10 transition. The 98 charter group was lower than the two-year charter and regular public groups at grades 9-10, and worse than all groups at 6-7.

Language

In language growth, the patterns described above were generally repeated with high gains for the 97 charter group and the lowest gains for the 98 charter group. Again, effects were neither large nor consistent. The 97 charter group had significantly higher gain than 98 only and public groups in grade 3 to 4 and higher than the 98 charter group in grades 6 to 7. In grades 8 to 9, the two-year charter group performed significantly better than the 98 charter group and regular public school group. Grades 8 to 9 was the only significant difference between two-year charter and the regular public school groups. The 98 charter group exhibited significantly worse performance than the regular public school group in grades 6 to 7 and 9 to 10.

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Figure 5.1 Average Change in Reading by Grade and Type

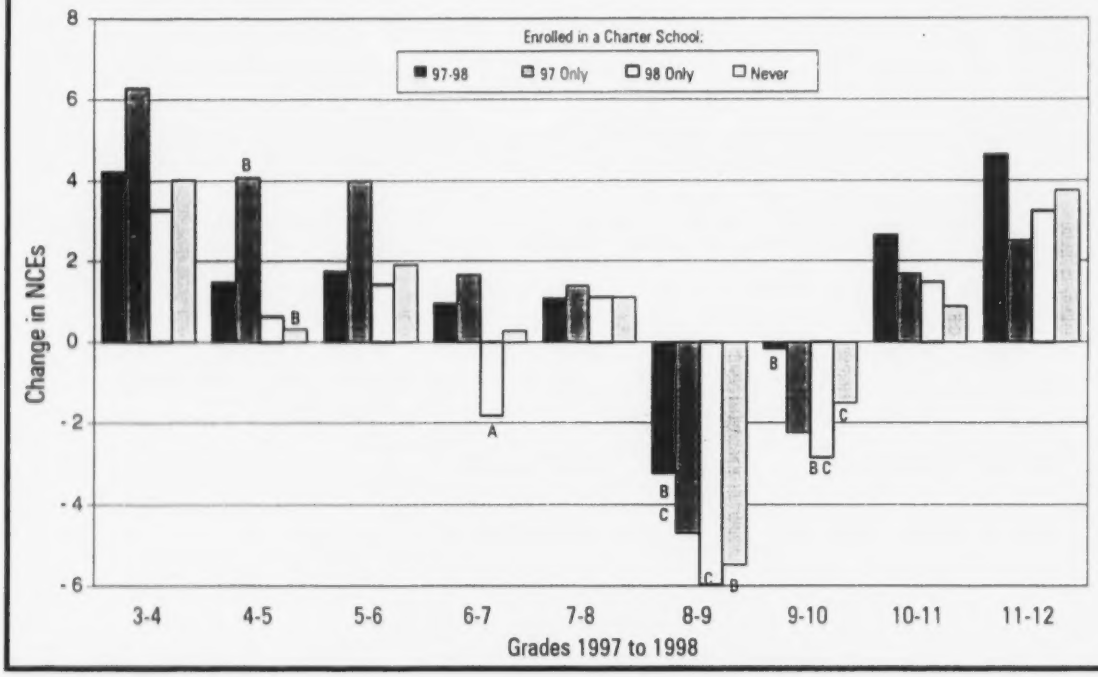
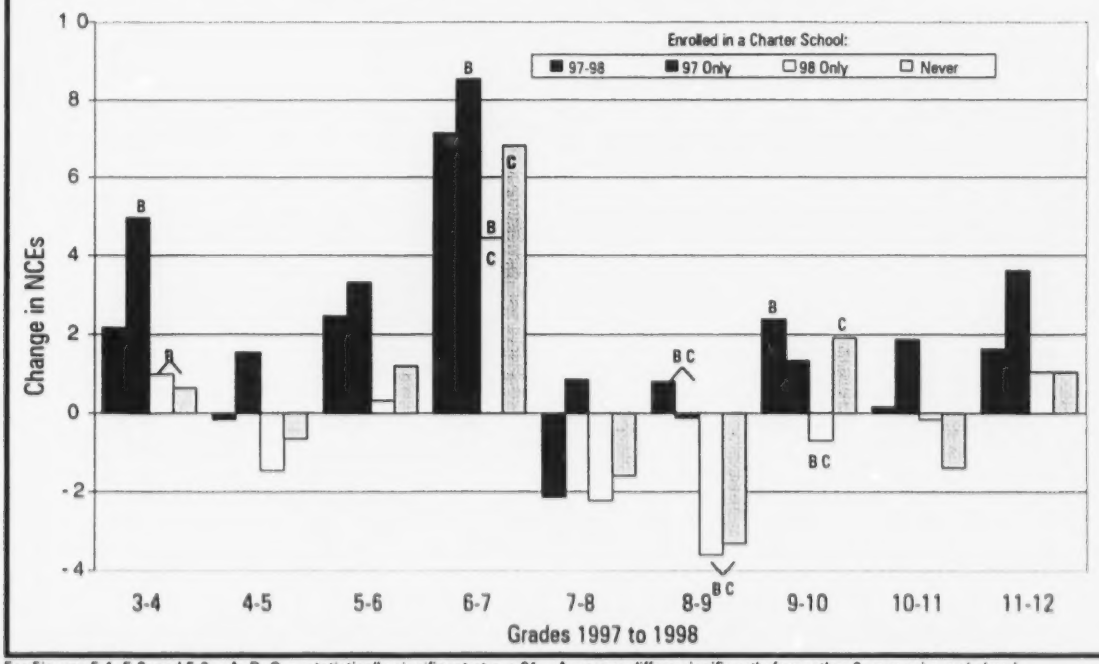


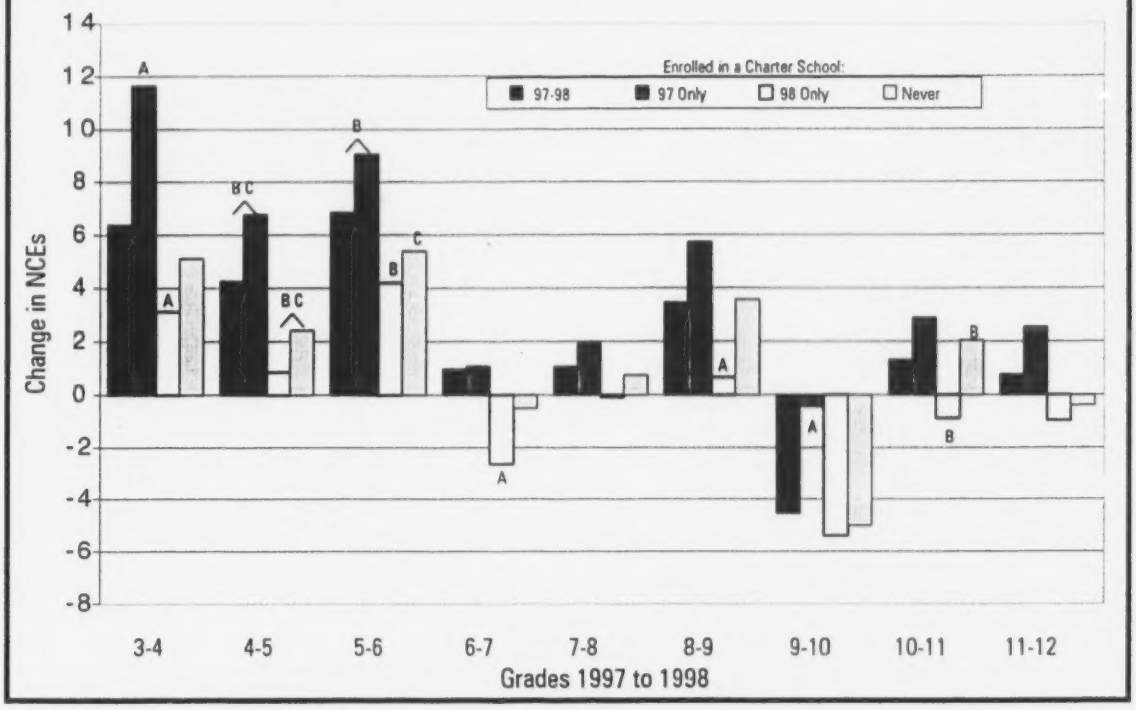
Figure 5.2 Average Change in Language Achievement by Grade and Type



For Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3—A, B, C = statistically significant at $p < .01$. A = group differs significantly from other 3 groups in grade level; B = two groups differ significantly from each other; C = two groups differ significantly from each other.

Note: Readers should recognize that statistical significance and meaningfulness are not the same.

Figure 5.3 Average Change in Math Achievement by Grade and Type



Mathematics

In mathematics achievement gains, students who left charter schools after 1997 consistently showed higher average gains than students in other groups. These results, however, were only significantly higher in the grade 3 to 4 transition and the grade 9 to 10 transition. The second consistent pattern is that students who entered charter schools in 1998 had consistently lower gains than other student groups, with significant results occurring at three grade levels (3 to 4, 6 to 7, and 8 to 9). At grades 10-11, the 98 charter group was significantly worse than the regular public school group. At grades 5-6, the 98 charter group performed worse than both the two-year charter and 97 charger group. At the grade 4 to 5 transition, both the 97/98 charter group and the 97 charter group performed significantly better than the 98 charter and regular public school groups. Across all grade levels, the average change for students who were not in charter schools was approximately the same as that of students in charter schools for two years. These small differences were only statistically significant at the 4-5 transition where two-year charters showed higher gain.

Results of an Analysis of Raw NCE Scores

While the graphics and statistical analyses reported above address the issue of the size of gain by group and grade, they do not indicate how the different groups vary in their 1997 and 1998 achievement levels. To address this, a series of dot-plots were constructed and are shown as Figures 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6. These figures indicate the 1997 average NCE (marked with an open circle) and the 1998 average NCE (marked with a triangle). The size of the change is indicated with a line extending between the two shapes. Positive gains are indicated by circles on the left and negative gains show the triangles to the left of the circle. (Negative gains actually reflect a loss in position to the national norming group, not a loss in knowledge from one year to the next.)

Reading

Reading scores, shown in figure 5.4, reveal that in the elementary grades, the two-year charter group started at a slightly higher level than the regular public school group but overall are fairly similar. This effect diminishes in the middle school years and reverses in high school. Across the grades, the 97 charter and 98 charter groups consistently have lower scores in 1997, and with the exception of the grades 3 to 4 transition, are also lower than the two-year and regular public groups in their 1998 SAT 9 scores.

Language

Language scores are similar to reading scores, with very similar starting points and gains between two-year charter and regular public school groups, with the two-year charter students declining in their scores and gains in relation to regular students beginning in the grade 7 to 8 transition. The 97 charter group and the 98 charter group begin the furthest behind the other groups with the 97 charter group most often making the largest gains and showing the most growth in the early years. Again, the 1997 achievement levels of all charter student groups decline with increasing grades.

Mathematics

Math scores in the elementary grades, similar to reading and language, show the two-year charter group and the regular public school group as very consistent in their 1997 achievement levels and growth. In middle and high school, however, the 1997 achievement levels of the charter school groups begin to fall, and by high school, are between 10 to 15 NCE points behind the regular public school students. Again, the 97 charter only and 98 charter only groups show 97 and 98 SAT 9 scores most often below the other groups, with the 97 charter only group showing the greatest gains in most grades, although few gains are significantly different from other groups, as Figure 5.3 shows.

Figure 5.4 Change in Reading NCE Score by Grade and Group

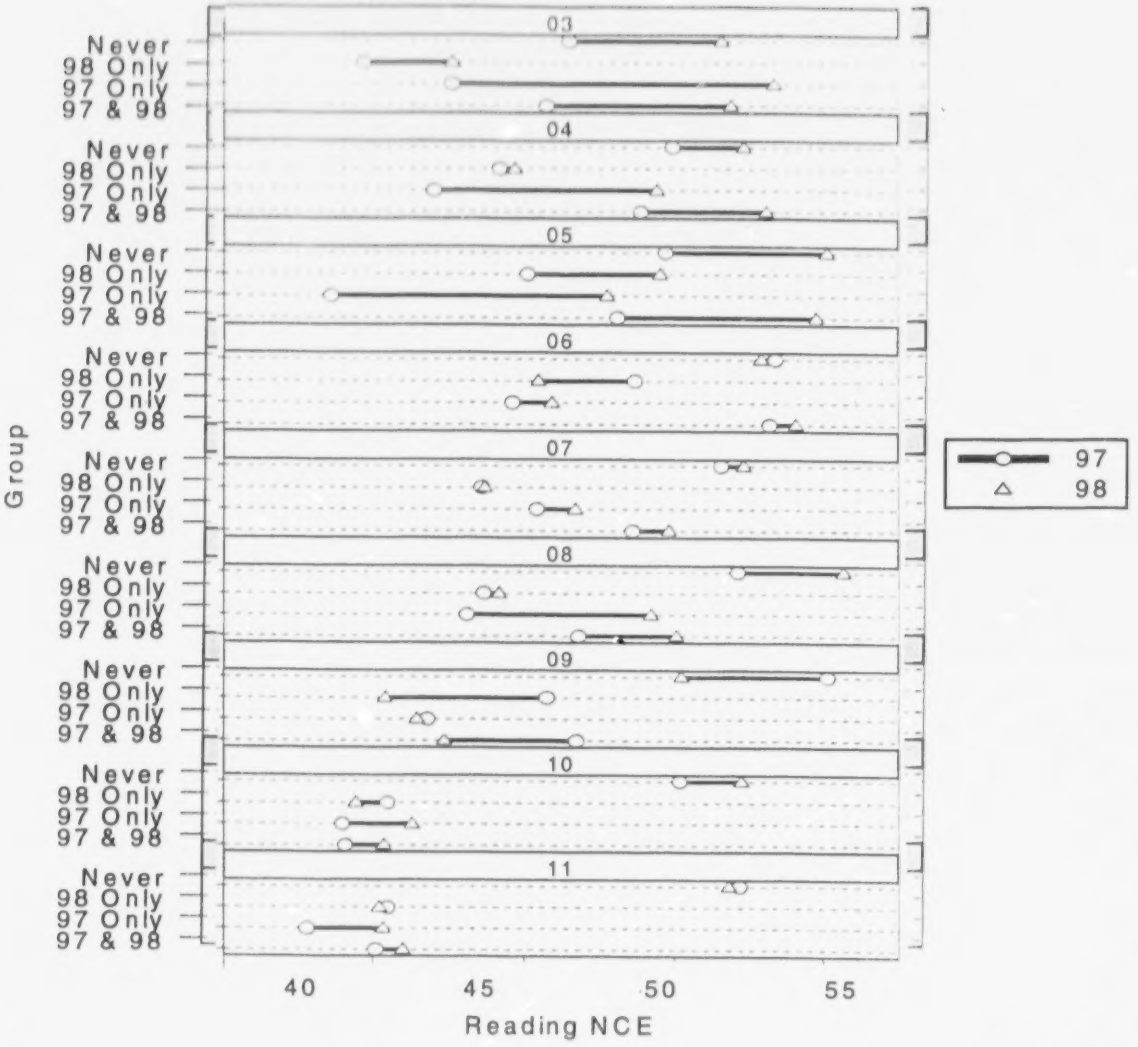


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Figure 5.5 Change in Language NCE Score by Grade and Group

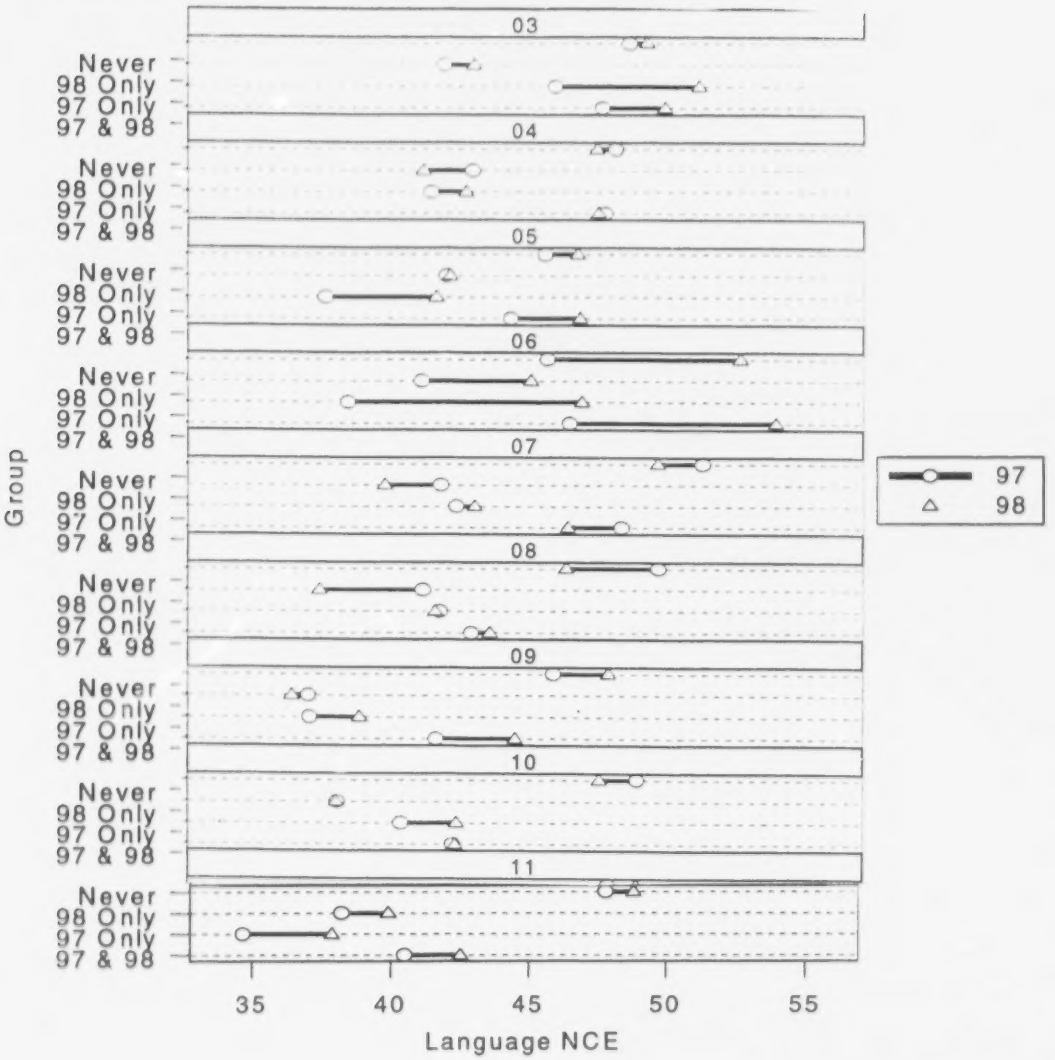
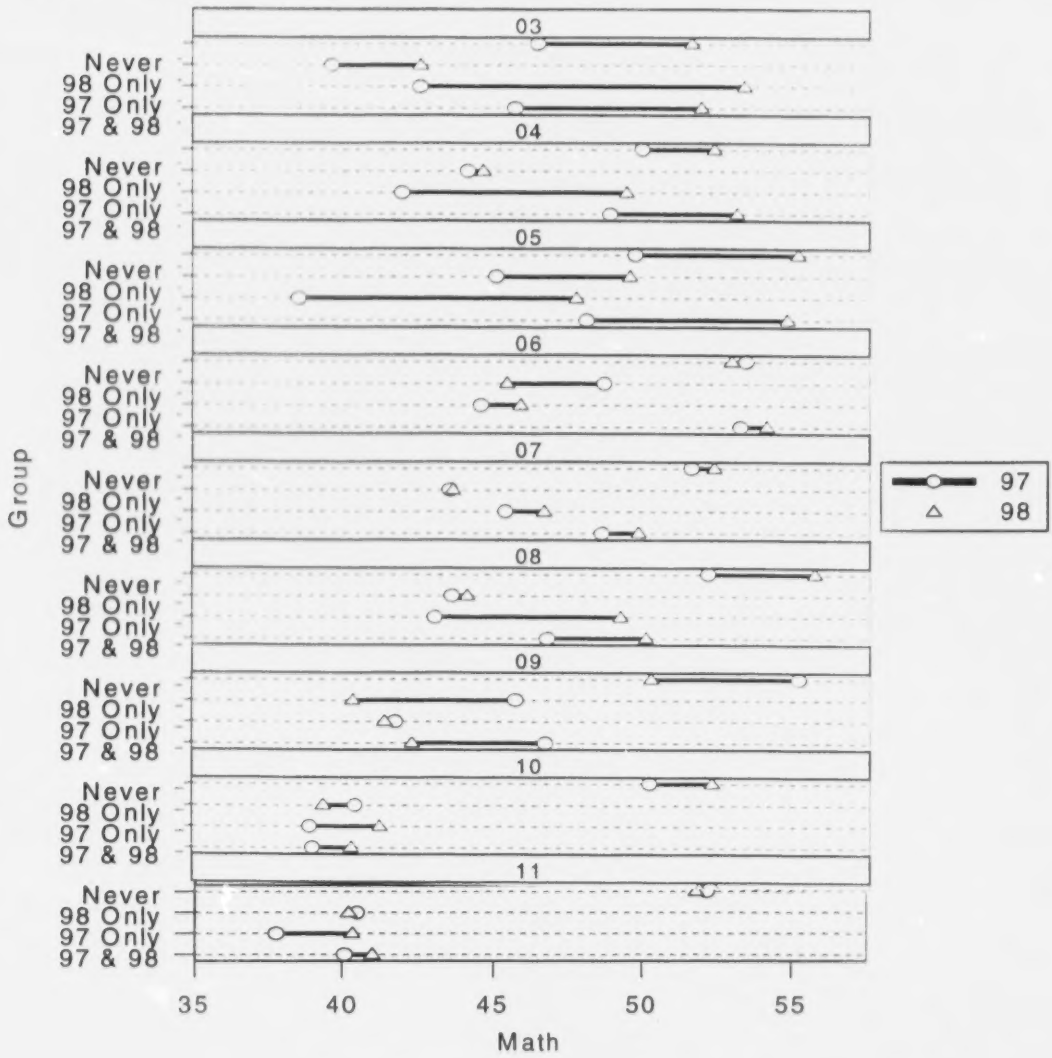


Figure 5.6 Change in Math NCE Score by Grade and Group



— 6 —
Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study was conducted as a progress evaluation of charter schools in Arizona. Charter school parents, students, teachers and directors, as well as other stakeholders in charter schools, were surveyed by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy regarding their experiences and opinions related to Arizona's charter schools. The primary issues addressed in the study were:

- Why and how do people choose charter schools?
- How satisfied are they with the schools?
- What are their concerns about the schools?
- What do we know about charter school students' academic achievement?

This section is organized into three parts: discussion, which contains a summary and discussion of the results, conclusions, and recommendations.

Discussion

Parents and Students

There was high agreement between parents of charter schools and the students themselves regarding the main reasons for the students' transfer from regular public schools to charter schools. Collectively, factors related to the students' academic performance (not doing well in classes/academically) and dissatisfaction (boredom, dislike of other students or negative social interactions with them) at their former school were the primary reasons for transfer cited by both parents and students. Large class sizes and insufficient help for the student by teachers were other reasons selected frequently by both groups.

Parents and students also selected a similar feature of the charter school as a top reason for attracting them to it. Parents chose the education program/curriculum of the charter school and students indicated that the charter school had a special program that they liked. The school's teaching methods and class size were other top-ranked reasons for parents being attracted to the school, and having friends at the school was another important reason for many students.

With regard to perceptions of student performance and satisfaction at the charter school, parents and students consistently had high levels of agreement that conditions were much better for the student at the charter school than at his/her previous school. Parents and students responded very positively and quite similarly to one another to items comparing the charter school to the student's former school on how well the student is doing academically, student attitudes toward the charter school, how well the student likes the charter school teachers, and how well she/he likes the students. In contrast to the high percentages of positive responses to these items, there were very low percentages of negative responses.

The consistency of positive parent and student responses regarding their satisfaction with the charter schools was again demonstrated in response to the parent question "Was anything about this charter school better, worse or different than what you expected?" and a similar question of students: "What features do you like and not like about your charter school?" Although the wording of the features was somewhat different between the parent and student surveys, the choice of top-rated responses was very similar across the two groups. Quality of teachers was rated highest by parents, and "my teachers" was rated highest by students. Eight of the top 10 items rated highest by teachers also had similarly worded or counterpart items rated in the top 10 by students. Notable among these items were academic expectations, school size, class size,

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attitude toward parents and attitude toward students.

Parents also had favorable opinions about their involvement and communication with their child's charter school. Parent responses were positive on all seven items dealing with these topics, with the number of parents indicating that conditions were better in these areas than at the child's previous school ranging from 59% to 70% across the seven items. Fewer than 10% of the parents indicated that conditions were worse at the charter school on any item. Students were not asked to respond to a comparable set of items.

An additional indicator of satisfaction is whether a student plans to return to the same charter school next year. When the data were adjusted for students who could not return because they were moving out of the area or because their next grade was not available at the school, 80% of the charter school parents and 76% of the students reported that the student would be returning. Only 6% of the parents and 8% of the students indicated that the student would not return. Thus, parents and students were again quite consistent with one another in their responses.

Parents and students shared some concerns about charter schools, and each group had unique concerns as well. Two concerns that were common to both groups were a lack of sports and extracurricular activities and the difficulty of transferring credits from a charter school at the secondary level to a regular public school. Both parents and students were also concerned about the potential effects of a limited curriculum or lack of extracurricular activities as they relate to college admission and scholarships. Parents also listed funding for capital improvements and operational funding for the school as concerns, while students also were concerned about their cafeteria or other eating site and about the need for a playground or recreation area.

The analysis of complaint files indicates that issues related to staffing, administration, and governance and issues related to communications and expectations represent the greatest proportion of complaints raised by charter schools parents. Moreover, there may be a pattern to school complaints over time. Based on the four years of data to analyze, the fewest complaints occurred in charter schools' first year of operation, the greatest number occurred in the second year, and the number of complaints began to trail off in the third year. One possible explanation may be that in the first year of operations, parents are unaware of problems or are willing to forgive problems they perceive as start-up glitches. In the second year, problems may no longer be tolerated and action is taken to change things. By the third year, problems get resolved, and the school functions more smoothly, resulting in fewer complaints.

This analysis is consistent with what directors, teachers, and the parents who send their children to charters said in interviews and surveys. Often, the first years are difficult. People are learning new skills and new roles. It appears that the proportion of complaints over time may be a function of the school's longevity or natural organizational development.

The complaint file data as well as the perceptions of participants in charter schools highlight an issue not previously discussed. Some of the problems faced by charter schools may be similar to those that any new or start-up school would face. Therefore, when looking at emerging issues in charter schools, it may be helpful to ask the question: to what extent is this a new school issue rather than a charter school issue?

Collectively, the parent and student data indicate that charter schools share many of the positive and negative features of small or new regular public schools that operate on limited budgets. Parents and students like many of these features: the smaller school size, small class sizes, the often friendly and familiar attitudes of school personnel, opportunities to be involved in school affairs, and a safe school environment. However, because of space and budget limitations, charter schools often lack features that parents and students have come to expect from larger schools, such as a more comprehensive curriculum, more

extracurricular activities, and building and campus facilities that include special areas for academic and recreational purposes.

For parents who are considering whether to enroll their child in a charter school, the parent and student data suggest that the decision often may involve a set of trade-offs. On the one hand, many charter schools may offer an environment that is more comfortable and personalized for a student because of the school's smaller size, its academic emphasis, or a particular set of beliefs that is consonant with those of the student and his/her family. On the other, regular public schools often offer a broader curriculum, a wider range of extracurricular activities and, in the best public schools cases, greater academic challenges for students. Parents who are involved in the decision-making process have the opportunity to investigate different schools and to consider these potential trade-offs in selecting the school that is most appropriate for their child's academic abilities, personal needs, and prior educational experiences.

Student Achievement Data

The analysis of student achievement as measured by SAT 9 test scores provides some indication of student progress in charter schools, but raises more questions than it answers. Overall, based upon the two years of test data available for analysis, it appears that charter schools are not performing very differently from other regular public schools. In examining 1997 and 1998 NCE scores and looking at the gain scores over the two years, very few significant differences occur.

Students in charter schools for two years have increased in achievement (in reading, language, and mathematics) at approximately similar levels as students at regular public schools. It may be that attending the same school for two years is a factor that contributes to the similarity in achievement levels since it is well known that mobility is highly linked to poor educational outcomes.

The analysis also revealed that by middle school, the students who attended charter schools for one year or more began to lag behind their regular public school age-mates. By high school, this effect was even more dramatic, with charter school students often 10 to 15 NCE points behind regular public school students at the 1997 testing. This effect may be a function of the program offerings at middle and high school level charters, a great number of which serve students who have not previously been successful in school. However, analysis of these scores in relation to the type of program and student demographics, which was beyond the scope of this study, is required before this interpretation can be verified.

The students attending charters for only one of the two years (either 1997 or 1998) started 1997 at consistently lower achievement levels than the other two groups. While they often made the most gains at the elementary level, they were also responsible for the largest negative changes in NCE score at the middle and high school levels over the two years. This is curious and especially difficult to interpret. These students may be some of the most mobile charter students, although data are not available to describe their past schooling patterns. Certainly, understanding student mobility and knowing why students left their charter or regular public school would help in the interpretation of this effect.

Finally, an analysis involving the average achievement gains at each charter school could not be conducted due to exceptionally small numbers of students in each grade at charter schools for whom test data were available from 1997 to 1998. The majority of schools with data reported data for less than 10 students per grade level. This small number is inadequate to use a mean NCE or gain score upon as any one individual can distort the average for the group. This "by school" limitation does *not*, however, affect the other analyses conducted for this evaluation since they relied on aggregated data. While small class size and school size are important features of charter schools, they are unfortunately not conducive to statistical analysis. Clearly, many charter schools have more than 10 students in one grade level, but with attrition from one year to the next, the number of students for whom test data are available over time is extremely limited. As charter school student populations become more stable, programs expand, and SAT 9 testing becomes more

routinized at these schools, more data should be available for future analyses of student achievement.

In summary, while the reader must recognize the inherent limitations of these findings, they nevertheless seem to indicate–in a preliminary way–that charter school students are achieving similar academic gains to students attending regular public schools. But understanding why this is so and more detailed interpretations of the data are highly problematic. As such, these findings on student achievement primarily serve to provide a point of departure for determining how a tightly controlled research design, more years of complete test data, and the utilization of student demographic data and school program information, can offer important information to parents, charter school operators, and public officials in the future.

Teachers and Directors

Teachers reported that the most common ways that they learned about the availability of their charter school teaching job was through a newspaper advertisement and by word of mouth from a colleague. Most teachers who were recruited were recruited by the charter school director and many were also recruited by a teacher at the charter school.

Class size, philosophy of education and teaching methods were rated by teachers as having attracted them to the charter school. Interestingly, these factors were also three of the four top-rated ones by parents as having attracted them to their child's charter school. Teachers also frequently described freedom—freedom from regulations, freedom to make decisions, freedom to take risks, etc.—as a reason for seeking out charter schools.

As one indicator of their satisfaction with their charter school, teachers were asked to rate many features of the school as better or worse than they initially expected when they were hired. Their ratings indicated that they were quite satisfied with the school. Of the 14 features rated most often by teachers as either better or worse than initially expected, 12 were rated as better and only 2 as worse. Quality of teachers and supportive administration were the two features rated most often as better.

A total of 85% of the teachers reported that they intend to return to the same charter school next year. This number is quite similar to the 80% of parents and 76% of students who indicated that the student is likely to return.

Although students and parents at charter schools rated the students' academic performance, attitude toward the school, and feelings about its teachers and students quite positively, teachers and directors gave even more positive ratings when asked how parents would rate it. The higher ratings by the teachers and directors may reflect a closer identification with the school and a feeling of greater responsibility for its quality by these key school personnel than by the students and their parents. Therefore, these data are reported with this caveat: the phenomenon of people presenting or judging themselves, as well as judging things with which they are closely identified very positively is well established in the psychology literature under the term self-presentation bias. This phenomenon may help to explain why the judgments by teachers and directors about parent ratings consistently were even more positive than those by parents and students.

Teachers and directors shared several concerns about charter schools. Lack of sports and extracurricular activities, funding for building/campus improvements, and salaries were in the top five concerns of both groups. Implementation of special education was also an important concern for both teachers and directors.

The one concern that was mentioned frequently by all four respondent groups was the lack of sports and extracurricular activities. Funding for building or campus improvements was also a major concern for three of the four groups of respondents, rated as the top concern by parents and directors and as fourth by teachers.

Other Stakeholders

The information from other stakeholders in charter schools was gathered mainly in individual interviews and dealt primarily with their opinions and concerns about the schools. Seven major areas of concern were identified: accountability, achievement, special education, equity and choice, school property ownership, teacher and director qualifications, and governance.

Most of the stakeholders who were interviewed were either in policy-making positions or in positions in which they serve as representatives or advocates for professional organizations or special-needs groups. Unlike charter school students, teachers and directors, they do not deal with charter schools on a full-time, everyday basis. Rather, they normally have responsibilities related to charter schools generally, rather than to a single school, as one part of a more comprehensive workload. Thus, their concerns about charter schools tended to be more general, and in several cases, more policy-related than those of the other respondents. These concerns served as one basis for several of the recommendations made at the end of this section.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this progress evaluation of charter schools.

- The primary reasons that students transfer to charter schools are that they were not performing well academically and/or they were not happy at their former school. Features that attracted parents and/or students about their charter school included its educational programs, teaching methods, and class size.

- Parents of charter school students and the students themselves are much more satisfied with the academic performance and attitudes of the students at their charter schools than at their former schools.

- Parents and students consider the teachers at charter schools to be their best feature compared to students' former schools. Other features identified by both groups as being much better at the charter school include school size, class size, attitude toward students and attitude toward parents.

- Analysis of student achievement data as measured by SAT 9 test scores provides an initial indication of student progress in charter schools. Overall, based upon the two years of data available for analysis, it appears that charter schools are not performing very differently than other regular public schools. Examination of 1997 and 1998 NCE scores and gain scores in reading, language, and mathematics over the two years reveal very few significant differences. Further research is needed to adequately understand the effects of charter schools on student achievement.

- Teachers at charter schools are quite satisfied with their teaching positions.

- Common concerns of parents, students and school personnel about charter schools include a lack of sports and other extracurricular activities, funding for building and campus improvements, transferability of charter school credits to regular public schools, implementation of special education requirements, and salaries.

- Major concerns of other stakeholders in charter schools include accountability, student achievement, special education, funding and facilities, and qualifications of teachers and directors.

Recommendations

The data from this study indicate that the parents and students who are consumers of their services believe charter schools are operating successfully and are very pleased with them. However, the charter school movement in Arizona is still in its early years, and many participants in this study expressed concerns and made suggestions about the schools. Again, some concerns raised (but certainly not all) may be new school rather than specifically charter school issues. The recommendations that follow are intended to

address many of the concerns expressed by participants in the study.

We offer these recommendations with some reservations. In particular, our concern is that each one could require additional personnel and additional costs. Now—five years after the passage of Arizona's charter school law—may be a good time to address some of the concerns of charter school constituents and stakeholders. But this should not be done without careful consideration of the burdens, both in dollars and in additional structure or bureaucracy, that addressing them may entail.

The recommendations are listed below, with each recommendation followed by a statement of information relevant to it.

- ***Enable the ADE charter school office to provide more outreach and to develop more fully as an information clearinghouse where interested parties can obtain information about charter schools.***

The majority of charter school parents (53%) reported learning about charter schools by word of mouth from a friend, relative or neighbor. At this time there is no good source of comparative information about charter schools that is readily available to most prospective consumers. Many stakeholders recommend that the quality of information available to parents be improved. The clearinghouse proposed by the governor's office and the state charter school board was considered to be an appropriate idea by stakeholders. The ADE charter school office is capable of fulfilling this function. However, more resources would need to be appropriated to increase capacity for data collection and analysis, producing and distributing appropriate materials, fielding calls and meeting with potential charter school parents.

- ***Train operators of charter schools on school regulations and policies.***

The review of complaint files and the comments of many stakeholders indicate that it's not easy being a charter school, especially at the beginning. There is a lot for the directors to learn, and it takes time. A total of 33% of the directors in the study have no prior school administration experience. Their learning process could be shortened and many initial problems eliminated through early direct training on such matters as policy development, public school practices, special education requirements, due process, and the roles and responsibilities of governing boards. Good training in special education is available now, but more systematic and comprehensive training on other issues would be beneficial.

- ***Encourage the development of transfer-of-credit agreements with regular public schools and articulation agreements with Arizona colleges and universities.***

Many charter school parents and students were concerned about the difficulty of transferring credits from a charter school to a regular public school and about the potential effects of a limited curriculum as it relates to college and university admission. Arrangements for transfer of credit from charter schools often occur on a case-by-case basis, and in several cases district schools have been reluctant to give credit for charter school classes. An effort to systematize the transfer-of-credit process and to develop model agreements that could be used by charter schools generally could help to reduce transfer-of-credit problems.

- ***Establish a high-level group to study funding issues and to make policy recommendations about them.***

Funding for building and campus improvements was a major concern of parents, teachers and directors, and it is also a key issue related to concerns about facilities (*e.g.*, cafeteria and recreation areas, accessibility to disabled persons, and extracurricular activities at charter schools). Further, there are many other funding issues, including the ability of charter school operators to profit from land purchased with public funds, long-term implications of charter schools' exemption from state facility standards, and the long-term state budget consequences related to the growth of charter schools. There are no easy

answers to many of these funding issues, of course, but it is important to make informed decisions about them before they become much bigger issues.

- ***Increase the focus on student achievement and accountability.***

Accountability for student achievement is a critical issue for charter schools, and there is strong agreement among stakeholders that a sharper focus on achievement is needed. Stakeholders noted the fact that the charter law permits districts to sponsor charter schools outside of their borders and see this as an obstacle to real accountability. In an attempt to ameliorate some district-related charter school accountability problems, ADE proposed two district sponsor-related revisions to the charter school law in their 1999 legislative agenda: 1) to remove the section of the law that exempts districts from any liability for a charter school's performance or failure to comply with the terms of their charter; and 2) to disallow districts found to be out of compliance with the Uniform System of Financial Records in the past two years from sponsoring any charter school. Making these changes would clearly improve accountability for district sponsored charter schools.

The application process is certainly a logical place to build a stronger focus on achievement and accountability. Our review of charter applications reveals that this focus has not been consistently understood by charter applicants nor consistently required by sponsors. Gaining an understanding of the relation between goals, measurement, and consequences and then reflecting this understanding in charter applications would provide a stronger basis to make future judgements about school progress and ultimately charter school renewal. Another way to increase the focus on achievement and accountability is through a benchmarking process, in which schools must specify their target performance levels, actively and regularly evaluating their progress. Exhibit C provides a benchmarking system design and a plan for implementing such a system.

- ***Conduct rigorous longitudinal research on the effects of charter schools on student academic achievement.***

The statistical analysis of SAT 9 student achievement data conducted for this study was intended to be a starting point for further research efforts. Because current data limitations meant that certain important student differences could not be controlled, no empirically verifiable statements can be made at this time about the effect that charter schools *per se* are having on student achievement. In order to understand how charter schools **effect** student academic progress, a study must be designed which: 1) controls for the self-selection of students into charter schools; 2) is longitudinal in nature; 3) utilizes student demographic variables; 4) adequately considers the effect of different **types** of school programs on achievement; 5) takes into account the differences of grade level; and 6) includes qualitative data from individuals leaving regular public and charter schools regarding their choices.

Appendix A

List of Interviewees

People Interviewed for the Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation

Name	Position	Organization
Jemeille Ackourey	Vice President, Club Operations	Boys and Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Phoenix
Kristi Bradford	Senion Librarian, Children's Services	Tucson-Pima Public Library
Jeff Andresen	Director	YMCA - Downtown Branch
Paul Elsner	Chancellor	Maricopa Community College District
Carol Fitch	Supervisor, Children & Young Adult Section	Phoenix Public Library
Jeffry Flake	Director	Goldwater Institute
Jeff Groscost	Senator	Arizona State Senate
Alfredo Gutierrez	Principal	Gutierrez & Jamison
Mary Hartley	Senator	Arizona State Senate
Marilyn Henley	Educational Consultant	Educational Cyberconnections, Inc.
Tim Hogan	Executive Director	Center for Law in the Public Interest
John Huppenthal	Senator	Arizona State Senate
Jerri Katzerman	Staff Attorney	Arizona Center for Disability Law
Ted Koulderie	Policy Analyst	Center for Policy Studies
Dale Larsen	Assistant Director	City of Phoenix Parks, Recreation & Libraries
Elaine Myers	Supervisor, Youth Programs	Phoenix Public Library
Tom Patterson	Senator	Arizona State Senate
Marion Pickens	Representative	Arizona House of Representatives
Tom Pickrell	Director of Legal Services	Arizona School Boards Association
Eric Premack	Director, Charter School Development Center Project	Institute for Education reform at California State University, Sacramento
Jon Schroeder	Director	Charter Friends National Network
Judy Sebastian	Program Director	Arizona Education Association
Tom Simplot	Deputy Director	Homebuilders Association of Central Arizona

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Appendix B

Surveys

Charter School Director
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation

Dear Charter School Director, Thank you for completing this survey. Your responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone at your school. All survey results will be reported in aggregate form except for questions written in *italics* which will be included on school profiles for this study. We do not consider information you share about your school to be an evaluation of your school and it will not be reported as such. Please mail this survey in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope **by June 15**. Thank you.

Please tell us about yourself?

1. Are you: ❑ Female ❑ Male

2. What is your title:_____

3. Do you have teaching responsibilities in addition to your administrative role? ❑ Yes ❑ No

4. How long have you been director at this charter school? _____

5. Were you one of the founders of this charter school? ❑ Yes ❑ No

6. Before becoming a director here, how many years were you an *administrator* at *(put number of years for all categories that apply)*:

_____ Public (non-charter) schools _____ Other charter schools

_____ Parochial schools _____ Private schools

❑ I was not a school administrator prior to working at this school

7. Before becoming a director here, how many years were you a *teacher* at *(put number of years for all categories that apply)*:

_____ Public (non-charter) schools _____ Other charter schools

_____ Parochial schools _____ Private schools

❑ I was not employed as a teacher prior to working here

8. What line of work were you in before you became a charter school director?

❑ I was working: ❑ Part time ❑ Full time

❑ I was a student: ❑ Part time ❑ Full time

What was your job title? _____

Continued on back ☛

9. What education programs have you completed? (*check all that apply*):

- ❑ High School diploma
- ❑ GED
- ❑ Bachelor's Degree:
  - ❑ In Education
  - ❑ In another discipline: Specify _____
- ❑ Post-baccalaureate degree for teaching
- ❑ Master's Degree:
  - ❑ In Education
  - ❑ In another discipline: Specify _____
- ❑ Doctorate Degree:
  - ❑ In Education
  - ❑ In another discipline: Specify _____

10. Do you hold an administrative certification from Arizona or another state?

❑ Yes, Arizona ❑ Yes, another state ❑ No

11. Do you have any other special certification or credentials either related or unrelated to education (such as Montessori certification, Certified Public Accountant)?

12. Please indicate if any of the following items related to charter schools concerned you when you took this job and if any currently concern you:

A concern initially	**A current concern**	
❑	❑	Faculty turnover (stability of staff)
❑	❑	Leadership of the school
❑	❑	Sustainability of your school
❑	❑	The school facility—school building/property
❑	❑	Operations funding for the school
❑	❑	Funding for building/campus improvements (capital funds)
❑	❑	Salary
❑	❑	Benefits
❑	❑	Your ability to work elsewhere in the future
❑	❑	Burnout
❑	❑	Transportation for parents/students
❑	❑	Sports/extracurricular activities for students
❑	❑	State support of the charter school idea
❑	❑	General public support of the charter school idea
❑	❑	Implementation of special education at your school
❑	❑	Being held accountable for student results
❑	❑	Something else not listed here: _____

Please answer a few questions about characteristics of your school and community.

13. Would you classify your school's location as:

❑ urban ❑ suburban ❑ rural ❑ on a reservation

14. What kind of a building are you housed in:

❑ Sole occupant of a traditional school building with campus
  ↘ If so, is it: ❑ Previously district operated campus
  ❑ Newly constructed
  ↘ If newly constructed is it: ❑ Permanent structure
  ❑ Prefabricated/modular units/portables
❑ Program operates as a school-within-a-school -- on the campus of a pre-existing k-12 school
❑ Converted office space
❑ On the premises of a community-based organization or governmental office (please describe):
_____
❑ Church building
❑ Shopping/strip mall
❑ Other (please describe):_____

15. How many people (including yourself) have held your position or one like it since the charter school began operating?_____

16. *If you have computers on site, do you operate a network?* ❑ Yes ❑ No

17. *Do you utilize distance learning technology, for example, video conferencing?* ❑ Yes ❑ No

18. Please describe any significant partnerships your school maintains with businesses or community organizations:

Please tell us about your student population:

19. For school year 1997/98, approximately how many of your students were:

_____ Continuing from previous year
_____ New from a public school *outside* the district that serves your area
_____ New from a public school *inside* the district that serves your area
_____ New from other charter schools
_____ New from private or religious schools
_____ New from home schooling

Continued on back
☛

20. *What was your October 1, 1997 enrollment?*_____

21. How many of your students enrolled on October 1, 1997 had valid Individual Education Programs (IEPs) when they enrolled in your school?_____

22. How many of these students (from Question #21) did your IEP team decide no longer required special education services due to the configuration of instruction provided by your school?_____

23. How many students in (from Question 21) were discontinued due to parent preference alone (as opposed to an IEP team)?_____

24. Of the students enrolled in your school on October 1, 1997 who received special education services, how many received services in the following ways:

_____ Within a regular classroom setting

_____ Pull-out program (part or full day) at the charter school

_____ Under contract with a school district

_____ Under contract with private individual or outside agency

25. Approximately, what percentage of your school budget is allocated for special education services (including payroll for resource teachers, aides, and transportation)?_____%

26. What percentage of your student population qualifies for free/reduced-price lunch program?_____%

27. Why do you think parents send their children to your school (Check all that apply):

- ❑ Class size
- ❑ School size
- ❑ Teaching methods
- ❑ Quality of teachers
- ❑ School's expectations of parents
- ❑ Student discipline/dress code
- ❑ School's attitude toward parents
- ❑ Schedule/hours
- ❑ Education program/curriculum
- ❑ Philosophy towards education
- ❑ Safe environment
- ❑ Academic expectations for students
- ❑ School leadership
- ❑ School's attitude toward students
- ❑ Location of school
- ❑ Type of students
- ❑ Other services or special school features (For example, tutoring, afterschool care) Please describe here:

28. How would parents rate this school compared to the previous school with regard to their children's:

	much better	**a little better**	**the same**	**a little worse**	**much worse**
Academic performance	O	O	O	O	O
Attitude toward school/learning	O	O	O	O	O
Feelings about their teachers	O	O	O	O	O
Feelings about their classmates	O	O	O	O	O

29. How would parents compare this school with their child's previous school in terms of:

	More	Same	Less
Opportunities to be involved	○	○	○
Input into decisions made	○	○	○
Communication with the school	○	○	○
Being treated as a valued member of the school community	○	○	○

Tell us about your staff.

30. Please indicate how many instructional and non instructional staff **(full time equivalents)** your school (site) employed this year:

_____ Classroom teachers—Total

_____ # Arizona certified

_____ # not Arizona certified but certified in another state

_____ Special education teachers—Total

_____ # with Arizona special education endorsement

_____ # without Arizona special education endorsement but endorsed in another state

_____ Teacher aides

_____ Special education aides

_____ Director/site administrator

_____ Assistant administrator

_____ Administrative assistant/secretaries

_____ Media specialists/librarian

_____ Counselors/social workers/Psychologists

_____ Maintenance/custodial

_____ Other staff not counted elsewhere (describe):

31. Please check (✔) any of the following Arizona certifications and endorsements that any individuals on your faculty have. Please also indicate with "✗" whether any certification or endorsement is held by any of your faculty in a state other than Arizona:

Certifications

- ❑ Elementary education
- ❑ Secondary education
- ❑ Alternative secondary
- ❑ Special education
- ❑ Vocational education
- ❑ Adult education
- ❑ Guidance & counseling
- ❑ School psychologist
- ❑ Provisional certification
- ❑ Emergency certification

Endorsements

- ❑ Art ❑ Dance
- ❑ Music ❑ Dramatic arts
- ❑ Bilingual education
- ❑ English as a second language
- ❑ Technology education
- ❑ Elementary foreign language
- ❑ Gifted
- ❑ Library/media specialist
- ❑ Math specialist ❑ Reading specialist
- ❑ Physical education

Continued on back ☛

32. How important is state certification to your school upon hiring teachers?

❑ Not important ❑ Somewhat important ❑ Very important

33. How important is it to your school that non-certified teachers you hire become certified?

❑ Not important ❑ Somewhat important ❑ Very important
❑ Not applicable—we only hire certified teachers

34. What are the most important criteria you use when hiring teachers?

35. Please describe three of the most significant difficulties you have faced in running your charter school:

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

3. _____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Please mail it in the envelope provided by June 15. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Lori Mulholland at Morrison Institute.

Morrison Institute for Public Policy
School of Public Affairs
College of Public Programs
Arizona State University
P. O. Box 874405
Tempe, AZ 85287-4405
Phone: (602)965-4525
Fax: (602)965-9219

Cuestionario Estudiantil

Evaluación De Progreso De Las Escuelas <Charter> Arizona

Estimado/a Estudiante, Gracias por llenar este cuestionario. Queremos saber acerca de tus experiencias en las escuelas <charter> (las auspiciadas por el gobierno pero administradas autonamente). Por favor, manda esto por correo por el 11 de mayo.

Primero, contesta, por favor, algunas preguntas acerca de ti y de tu escuela charter.

1. Por favor, rodea con círculo tu edad: 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

2. ¿A cuál tipo de escuela asistías justo antes de que empezaste a asistir a esta escuela <charter>?

- ❑ Otra escuela <charter>
- ❑ una escuela pública regular (no <charter>)
- ❑ enseñado/a en casa
- ❑ Una escuela de la iglesia/una religiosa
- ❑ una escuela privada
- ❑ No estoy seguro/a

3. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que asistes a esta escuela <charter>?

Este es mi... ❑ primer año ❑ segundo año ❑ tercer año ❑ Hace más de tres años

Las pocas preguntas que siguen tienen que ver con tu decisión asistir a esta escuela <charter>:

4. ¿Por qué querías cambiarte de escuela? (Marca **TODAS** las razones que te parezcan correctas para ti).

❑ No me cambié de escuela. Ésta es la primera escuela a donde yo he asistido. (Si "sí" ve a la Pregunta 5).

Yo no estaba feliz en la otra escuela porque...

- ❑ Mi clase tenía demasiados estudiantes
- ❑ Había demasiados estudiantes en la otra encuela
- ❑ No me gustaban/ no me llevaba bien con los alumnos
- ❑ Me sentía mal acerca de mi mismo/a en la otra escuela
- ❑ No progresaba en mis clases
- ❑ Estaba aburrido/a
- ❑ Los maestros no me podían ayudar cuando los necesitaba
- ❑ Las tareas eran demasiado fáciles para mí
- ❑ La otra escuela no era segura

Yo quería asistir aquí porque...

- ❑ Mis amigos asisten a esta escuela
- ❑ Tengo a otros miembros de mi familia quienes asisten a esta escuela
- ❑ Esta escuela <charter> tenía un programa especial que me gustaba
- ❑ Nos mudamos a otra vecindad

❑ Tenía yo otros motivos por los cuales quería cambiarme de escuela (*por favor, dinos por qué*):

✎ _____

Favor de voltear la página ➪➪➪➪

Las siguientes preguntas te preguntan acerca de qué opinas de la escuela <charter> a donde asistes:

5. **Por cada declaración, pon una ✗ en la cara que describe cómo te sientes:**

Bien, me gusta esto de mi escuela	Más o menos, ni bueno ni malo, O no tengo opinión ninguna	Mal, no me gusta esto de mi escuela
☺	😐	☹

☺	😐	☹	La cantidad de estudiantes en mi clase	☺	😐	☹	Lo que se enseña—los asuntos
☺	😐	☹	La cantidad de estudiantes en la escuela	☺	😐	☹	La seguridad de la escuela
☺	😐	☹	La manera en que aprendemos las cosas	☺	😐	☹	Lo que esperan que los alumnos
☺	😐	☹	Mis maestros	☺	😐	☹	El/la director/a de la escuela
☺	😐	☹	Las reglas de la escuela	☺	😐	☹	Cómo la escuela trata a los alumnos
☺	😐	☹	El código de vestidura	☺	😐	☹	Qué tan cerca está la escuela de mi casa
☺	😐	☹	Cómo la escuela trata a mi familia	☺	😐	☹	Transportación a la escuela
☺	😐	☹	Los estudiantes en la escuela	☺	😐	☹	El horario o las horas de la escuela
☺	😐	☹	El edificio de la escuela	☺	😐	☹	El campo de recreo/ las áreas recreativas
☺	😐	☹	Donde comemos—la cafetería	☺	😐	☹	Los deportes u otras actividades
☺	😐	☹	Cualquier otra cosa no ya mencionada: ↓	☺	😐	☹	La manera en que se dan calificaciones

✎ _____

6. **Por cada declaración, piensa en cómo te va AHORA <u>COMPARADA</u> <u>CON LA ÚLTIMA ESCUELA DONDE ASISTÍAS.</u>**
Marca el círculo que describe cómo te va ahora--mucho o poco mejor, igual, un poco o mucho peor.

❑ No puedo contestar. Ésta es la primera escuela adonde he asistido. (Si "sí" ve a la Pregunta 7.)

	mucho mejor	un poco mejor	igual	un poco peor	mucho peor
a. ¿Cómo estás progresando en tus clases?	○	○	○	○	○
b. ¿Cómo te sientes acerca de ir a la escuela?	○	○	○	○	○
c. ¿Cómo te gustan los maestros?	○	○	○	○	○
d. ¿Cómo te gustan los demás estudiantes en la escuela?	○	○	○	○	○

7. ¿Piensas que regresarás a esta escuela <charter> este año que viene?

❑ Sí ❑ No ☞ Si contestaste NO, ¿te cambias de escuela porque...

❑ No estoy seguro/a

❑ el grado en que vas a estar no se enseña aquí?

❑ otra razón

8. Si vas a asistir a otra escuela en el año que viene, ¿a cuál tipo de escuela asistirás a lo mejor?

❑ una escuela pública regular (no <charter>)
❑ otra escuela <charter>
❑ una escuela privada
❑ una de la iglesia/una religiosa
❑ regreso a esta escuela
❑ enseñado/a en casa
❑ no estoy seguro/a

¡¡Muchas gracias!! Por favor, devuelve este cuestionario <u>y el formulario de permiso azul</u> en el sobre blanco proveído por el 11 de mayo.

Cuestionario de los padres
Evaluación del progreso de las escuelas <charter> en Arizona

Estimado Padre/Estimada Madre; Gracias por prestarnos el tiempo para llenar este cuestionario. Sus experiencias son el mejor instrumento para ayudarnos a aprender acerca de las escuelas <charter> de Arizona (las escuelas auspiciadas con fondos del gobierno, pero administradas autonamente). Acuérdese, por favor, que sus respuestas son completamente anónimas y confidenciales. Todos los resultados del cuestionario serán agrupados y analizados juntos. La información que ud. comparte en este cuestionario no se usará para evaluar la escuela de su hijo/a. **Favor de enviar este cuestionario al <Morrison Institute> en ASU (la Universidad estatal de Arizona) por el 4 de MAYO.**

Favor de darnos un poco de información historial acerca de sus hijos de edad escolar:

1. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene ud. en **esta** escuela <charter>? _____

2. ¿Tiene ud. otros hijos que sean eligibles por su edad o grado escolar para asistir a esta escuela <charter> pero que no asisten aquí?
   ❑ Sí ❑ No

3. Si la respuesta es <Sí>, ¿por qué no asisten los demás aquí?

   ❑ Esta escuela no es apropiada para mi(s) otro(s) hijo(s)
   ❑ Está(n) contento(s) mi(s) otro(s) hijo(s) en su escuela actual.
   ❑ No le(s) interesa a mi(s) otro(s) hijo(s) asistir a esta escuela.
   ❑ Otra razón: *(favor de describir)* _____
   _____

4. Si tiene otros hijos de edad escolar (K-12), por favor, escriba cuántos ud. tenga en cada tipo de escuela:

   ❑ Escuela pública regular (no <charter>) ❑ Escuela parroquial ❑ Enseñado/a en casa
   ❑ Otra escuela <charter> ❑ Escuela privada ❑ Otra

Favor de contestar las siguientes preguntas de esta sección como se relacionan con el niño cuyo nombre aparece en el sobre en que se envió este cuestionario.

5. ¿A cuál tipo de escuela asistió su hijo/a antes de que vino a esta escuela <charter>?

   ❑ Escuela pública regular (no <charter>) ❑ Escuela parroquial ❑ Enseñado/a en casa
   ❑ Otra escuela <charter> ❑ Escuela privada ❑ Otra ❑ Nunca asistió a otra escuela

6. ¿Hace cuántos años que su hijo/a asiste a esta escuela <charter>?

   ❑ Este es el primer año ❑ Este es el segundo año ❑ Este es el tercer año
   ❑ Asistía aquí antes de que se convirtió en una escuela <charter>

Continuación atrás
☛

C2

Las pocas preguntas que siguen se relacionan con la manera en que ud. seleccionó esta escuela <charter>.

7. ¿Cuáles eran las razones por las cuales decidió ud. cambiarle a su hijo de su escuela anterior a esta escuela <charter>? (Marque TODAS las respuestas que se apliquen.)

- ❑ Mi hijo nunca se cambió de escuela. Siempre ha asistido a esta escuela
- ❑ La escuela anterior era demasiada grande
- ❑ La cantidad de estudiantes por clase era demasiada, o sea, había demasiados alumnos por cada profesor
- ❑ El niño no estaba progresando academicamente
- ❑ El niño estaba aburrido o no se le daban desafíos en la escuela anterior
- ❑ El niño no estaba a gusto en la escuela anterior
- ❑ El niño se sentía muy poca auto-estimación (amor propio) en la escuela anterior
- ❑ Había preocupaciones por su seguridad en la escuela anterior
- ❑ El ambiente social/la manera en que se llevaba con los alumnos era negativo en la escuela anterior
- ❑ Los maestros/la facultad de la escuela anterior no estaban dispuestos/no podían ayudarle a mi niño
- ❑ No teníamos muchos problemas con la otra escuela; no más es que esta escuela es mejor/satisface las necesidades específicas de mi hijo/a
- ❑ Otra razón (*favor de describir*): _____

8. ¿Cuáles facciones le atrajeron primero a esta escuela <charter>? (Marque todas las respuestas que se apliquen)

- ❑ Su programa académica/de estudios
- ❑ Su filosofía hacia la educación
- ❑ Profesores de buena calidad
- ❑ Disciplina/código de vestidura
- ❑ La actitud de la escuela hacia los alumnos
- ❑ Lo que la escuela esperaba de los padres
- ❑ El tamaño de las clases
- ❑ Sus métodos de instrucción
- ❑ El tamaño de la escuela
- ❑ El horario/ horas de operación
- ❑ La actitud de la escuela hacia los padres
- ❑ Esperanzas académicas para los alumnos
- ❑ Liderazco de la escuela
- ❑ Ambiente seguro
- ❑ Su localidad
- ❑ El tipo de estudiantes
- ❑ Otros servicios o facciones destacadas de la escuela (por ejemplo, auxilio académico <tutoring>, cuidado de niños/guardería después de la escuela) (*Favor de describir*): _____

9. ¿Había algunas preocupaciones acerca de las escuelas <charter> en general o ésta en particular con respeto a los asuntos alistados abajo?

una preocupación al principio	**una preocupación que sigue**	
❑	❑	Transporte a la escuela
❑	❑	La estabilidad de personal en la escuela
❑	❑	La estabilidad del liderazco de la escuela
❑	❑	El edificio/las facilidades de la escuela
❑	❑	Auspicios/fondos operativos por la escuela
❑	❑	Auspicios para adelantos del edificio o campo
❑	❑	Falta de deportes o programas suplementarios
❑	❑	Otra preocupación (*favor de describir*): _____

10. Al decidir buscar otras opciones para la educación de su hijo/a, ¿cuáles tipos de escuelas exploró ud.? (Marque todo lo que se aplique.)

- ❑ Investigué otras escuelas públicas regulares (no <charter>)
- ❑ Investigué no más una escuela <charter> (la que seleccioné)
- ❑ Investigué varias escuelas <charter>--¿Cuántas investigó? _____
- ❑ Investigué las escuelas privadas
- ❑ Investigué las escuelas parroquiales
- ❑ Investigué la opción de enseñarle en casa

11. Al investigar acerca de las escuelas <charter>, ¿cuáles cosas hizo ud.? (Marque todo lo que se aplique)

- ❑ Llamé por teléfono o pasé por la escuela para lograr info/folleto
- ❑ Hice una cita para hacer una jira de la escuela
- ❑ Entrevisté al (a la) director(a)/dirigente de la escuela
- ❑ Conocí a los maestros
- ❑ Observé una clase durante las horas de escuela
- ❑ Pregunté a mis amigos/vecinos acerca de la reputación de la escuela
- ❑ Busqué info acerca de las calificaciones que sacan los estudiantes en los exámenes que toman/busqué otra info para comparar ésta con otras escuelas
- ❑ Otra cosa que hice (*favor de describir*): _____

12. ¿Cómo averiguó acerca de la escuela a donde asiste su hijo/a? (Marque todas las respuestas que se apliquen)

- ❑ Un amigo/pariente/vecino me la sugerió
- ❑ La vi al pasar por allí caminando/en carro
- ❑ En el periódico/por la radio/en la tele
- ❑ Recibí un volante por correo/ en la puerta de mi casa
- ❑ El personal en la escuela donde mi hijo(a) asistía antes nos la sugerió
- ❑ Una agencia/iglesia u otra organización nos la refirió
- ❑ Por la buena reputación de la escuela
- ❑ Supe de otra forma (*favor de describir*): _____

13. Antes de que ud. encontró esta escuela <charter>, ¿asistió su hijo a otra escuela que **no** le salió bien?

- ❑ Sí, a otra(s) escuela(s) pública(s) regular(es) (no-<charter>)—¿a cuántas? ___
- ❑ Sí, a otra escuela <charter>—¿a cuántas? ___
- ❑ Sí, a una escuela privada—¿a cuántas? ___
- ❑ Sí, a una escuela parroquial—¿a cuántas? ___
- ❑ Se le enseñó en casa por ___ años
- ❑ Sí, a otra--(*describa el tipo de escuela, por favor*): _____
- ❑ No

Estas preguntas que siguen tienen que ver con su satisfacción con la elección de mandarle a su hijo/a a esta escuela <charter>.

14. Utilize el código dado para marcar lo que salió diferente de lo que ud. había esperado.
1 = mejor de lo que esperaba ***2 = peor de lo que esperaba*** ***3 = diferente de lo que se me comunicó al principio***

___ El tamaño de las clases
___ El tamaño de la escuela
___ Sus métodos de instrucción
___ Profesores de buena calidad
___ Lo que la escuela esperaba de los padres
___ Disciplina/código de vestidura
___ La actitud de la escuela hacia los padres
___ El horario/ horas de operación
___ Su programa académica/de estudios
___ Su filosofía hacia la educación
___ Ambiente seguro
___ Esperanzas académicas para los alumnos
___ Liderazco de la escuela
___ La actitud de la escuela hacia los alumnos
___ Su localidad
___ El tipo de estudiantes
___ Otros servicios o facciones destacadas de la escuela (por ejemplo, auxilio académico <tutoring>, cuidado de niños/guardería después de la escuela) *Favor de describir*: _____

_____

15. Describa, por favor, cualquier cambios principales que hayan ocurrido en la escuela <charter> atravez del tiempo, y como ésto les haya afectado a su(s) hijo(s) o a ud.

16. ¿Cuáles son las maneras en que esta escuela <charter> se comunica con ud.? (Marque todo lo que se aplique.)

❑ Noticias de la escuela: ❑ semanales ❑ mensuales ❑ con menos frequencia ❑ nunca
❑ Llamadas por teléfono cuando hay problemas
❑ Conferencias entre los padres y los profesores
❑ Llamadas para informarnos acerca de eventos que vienen o para darnos comentarios positivos acerca de mi hijo/a
❑ El/la maestro/a tiene una póliza muy abierta; puedo llegar para hablar a cualquier hora
❑ La/el director/a tiene una póliza muy abierta; puedo llegar para hablar a cualquier hora

Estas preguntas se tratan de las experiencias de ud. y las de su hijo/a con esta escuela y cómo se comparan con las en la escuela anterior. Si no asistió a otra escuela, vaya a la pregunta #23.

17. Comparado con la escuela anterior de su hijo/a:

	Mejor	Igual	Peor
El intento de esta escuela es	❑	❑	❑
La reacción de esta escuela cuando tengo un problema con la escuela o con la/el maestro/a es	❑	❑	❑
Cuando vengo a esta escuela, el personal en la oficina me trata	❑	❑	❑

18. Comparado con la escuela donde su hijo/a asistió antes, ¿qué opina ud. de lo siguiente?

Tengo ❑ más ❑ igual ❑ menos (las) oportunidades para estar involucrada
Valen ❑ más ❑ igual ❑ menos mis sugerencias en las decisiones hechas
Me comunico ❑ más ❑ igual ❑ menos con esta escuela
Me estiman ❑ más ❑ igual ❑ menos como miembro de la comunidad escolar

19. Comparado con la escuela anterior de su hijo/a, ¿cómo está progresando en los estudios?

❑ Mucho mejor ❑ Más o menos igual ❑ Algo peor
❑ Algo mejor ❑ Mucho peor

20. Comparado con la escuela anterior de su hijo(a), ¿cómo es su actitud hacia la escuela y el aprendizaje?

❑ Mucho mejor ❑ Más o menos igual ❑ Algo peor
❑ Algo mejor ❑ Mucho peor

21. Comparado con la escuela anterior de su hijo/a, ¿cómo se siente él/ella hacia los maestros?

❑ Le gustan más ❑ Más o menos igual ❑ Le gustan un poco menos
❑ Le gustan un poco mejor ❑ Le gustan mucho menos

22. Comparado con la escuela anterior de su hijo(a), ¿cómo se lleva con los alumnos?

❑ Mucho mejor ❑ Más o menos igual ❑ Algo peor
❑ Algo mejor ❑ Mucho peor

23. ¿Planea ud. mandarlo(a) a su hijo(a) aquí a la misma escuela por el año que viene?

❑ Sí ❑ No. Mi hijo va a estar en el próximo grado escolar, del cual no hay en esta escuela
❑ No estoy segura/o todavía ❑ No. Esta escuela no nos satisface en lo que necesitamos

24. Si su hijo/a no va a asistir a esta escuela actual por el año que viene (por cualquiera razon), ¿a cuál tipo de ambiente educativo planea ud. mandarle?

❑ Otra escuela <charter> ❑ Escuela pública regular (no <charter>)
❑ Escuela parroquial ❑ Escuela privada
❑ Todavía no he decidido ❑ Otro: _____

25. ¿Cómo va su hijo/a a la escuela?

❑ Camina/anda en bicicleta ❑ La escuela provee transporte ❑ El distrito escolar provee transporte
❑ Conduce el carro ❑ La familia le lleva en carro ❑ Usa el camión público de la ciudad
❑ Compartimos los <raides>/tomamos turnos con otros padres

26. Si su hijo/a está en un grado entre 7–12, ¿qué tan probable sería que se graduara de la escuela segundaria si **no** estuviera disponible esta escuela?

❑ Muy probable que se graduara ❑ Algo probable ❑ No es probable que se graduara

27. ¿Tiene algunos comentarios que quisiera compartir ahora acerca de su experiencia con las escuelas <charter>, o tal vez con cambios notados en su hijo o los notados en la escuela?

Favor de contestar estas últimas preguntas acerca de su familia.

28. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que su familia vive en este domicilio actual?

❑ Menos de un año ❑ Entre 1 y 2 años ❑ Entre 2 y 4 años ❑ Más de cuatro años

29. ¿Cuál es la edad de cada hijo que vive consigo? *(Marque con círculo cada edad que se aplique)*

Infante 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

30. Favor de indicar la categoría que mejor describe su ingreso anual de la familia *(antes de que se saquen los impuestos)*:

❑ Menos de $15,000
❑ $15,000 a $25,000
❑ $25,000 a $35,000
❑ $35,000 a $50,000
❑ $50,000 a $75,000
❑ $75,000 a $100,000
❑ Más de $100,000
❑ Prefiero no contestar

31. ¿Cuántos miembros de familia, incluyéndose a ud., se mantienen con este ingreso?_____

¡Muchas gracias por llenar este cuestionario! Si le gustaría saber más de este estudio, comuníquese con Lori Mulholland o Lisa Peck en el Morrison Institute en

Morrison Institute for Public Policy
School of Public Affairs
College of Public Programs
Arizona State University
P. O. Box 874405
Tempe, AZ 85287-4405
Phone: (602)965-4525
Fax: (602)965-9219

Student Survey
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation

Dear Student, thanks for completing this survey. We want to know about your experiences in charter schools. Please mail this and blue permission form in the white envelope by May 11.

First, please answer a few questions about yourself and your charter school:

1. **Please circle your age:** 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

2. **What kind of a school did you go to right before you went to this charter school?**

- ❑ Another charter school
- ❑ Regular public (not a charter) school
- ❑ Home school
- ❑ Religious/church school
- ❑ Private school
- ❑ I'm not sure

3. **How long have you gone to this charter school?**

This is my... ❑ first year ❑ second year ❑ third year ❑ longer than 3 years

The next few questions are about your decision to go to your charter school:

4. **Why did you want to change schools? (Check ALL reasons that are right for you)**

- ❑ I didn't change schools. This is the first school I have attended. (If true, go to Question 5.)

I was not happy at my old school because...

- ❑ My old school was too big
- ❑ My class had too many students
- ❑ I didn't like or get along with the students
- ❑ I felt bad about myself at my old school
- ❑ I wasn't doing well in my classes
- ❑ I was bored
- ❑ The work was too easy for me
- ❑ Teachers couldn't help me when I needed it
- ❑ My old school was not safe

I wanted to go here because...

- ❑ My friends go to this school
- ❑ I have other family members who go to this school
- ❑ This charter school had a special program I liked
- ❑ We moved to a new neighborhood

- ❑ I had other reasons for wanting to leave my old school (please tell us what):

✎ _____

The next questions ask you about how you feel about the charter school you attend:

Turn over, Please ➪➪➪➪

5. For each statement, put an ✗ on the face that describes what you feel:

	Good, I like this about my school ☺	OK, not good or bad OR I don't have any opinion either way 😐	Bad, I do not like this about my school ☹
	☺ 😐 ☹	The number of students in my class	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The number of students in my school	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The way we learn things	
	☺ 😐 ☹	My teachers	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The school rules	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The dress code	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The way the school treats my family	
	☺ 😐 ☹	Students at the school	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The school building	
	☺ 😐 ☹	Where we eat—cafeteria	
	☺ 😐 ☹	Anything else that is not listed here ↓	
	☺ 😐 ☹	What is taught—the subjects	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The safety of the school	
	☺ 😐 ☹	What they expect students to learn	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The principal or school director	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The way the school treats students	
	☺ 😐 ☹	How close the school is to my home	
	☺ 😐 ☹	Transportation to my school	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The schedule or hours	
	☺ 😐 ☹	Playground/recreation areas	
	☺ 😐 ☹	Sports or other activities	
	☺ 😐 ☹	The way students are graded	

✎ _____

6. For each statement, think about how you are doing NOW compared to the last school you went to. Mark the circle that describes how you are doing—a lot or a little better, same, a little or a lot worse.

❑ I didn't change schools. This is the first school I have attended. (If true, go to Question 7.)

	a lot better	a little better	about the same	a little worse	a lot worse
a. How are you doing in your classes?	○	○	○	○	○
b. How do you feel about going to school?	○	○	○	○	○
c. How do you like your teachers?	○	○	○	○	○
d. How do you like the other students?	○	○	○	○	○

7. Do you think you will go back to this charter school next year?

❑ Yes ❑ No ☞ If NO, are you leaving because ...

❑ Not Sure

❑ The grade you will be in is not taught here

❑ Another reason ✎ _____

8. If you ARE going to another school next year, what type of school will you probably attend?

❑ I'm going back to this school ❑ Private school ❑ Home school

❑ Regular public (not a charter) school ❑ Another charter school ❑ I'm not sure

❑ Religious/church school

THANKS VERY MUCH!! PLEASE SEND THIS SURVEY AND BLUE PERMISSION FORM BACK IN THE WHITE ENVELOPE BY MAY 11

Parent Survey
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation

Dear Parent, Thanks for taking the time to complete this survey. Your experiences are the best tool to help us learn about Arizona's charter schools. Please remember that your responses are completely anonymous and confidential. All survey results will be grouped and analyzed together. Information you share in this survey will not be used to evaluate your child's school. **Please mail this survey to Morrison Institute at ASU by May 4th.**

Please give us some background information about your school aged children:

1. How many children do you have in **this** charter school? _____

2. Do you have other children that are age/grade eligible to attend this charter school but do not?
   ❑ Yes ❑ No

3. If yes, why don't the others attend here?

   ❑ This school is not right for my other child/children
   ❑ My other child/children are doing fine in their current school
   ❑ My other child/children have no interest in attending this school
   ❑ Other: *please describe* _____
   _____

4. If you have other school-age (K-12) children, please tell us where your other children attend school. Please place the number of children you have at schools shown below:

   _____ Regular (non-charter) public school _____ Parochial school _____ Home school
   _____ Another charter school _____ Private school _____ Other

Please answer the rest of these questions as they relate to the child whose name appears on the envelope this survey came in.

5. What kind of school did your child attend before going to this charter school?

   ❑ Regular (non-charter) public school
   ❑ Parochial school
   ❑ Home school
   ❑ Another charter school
   ❑ Private school
   ❑ Other
   ❑ This is the first school this child attended

6. How long has your child attended this charter school?

   ❑ This is the first year
   ❑ This is the second year
   ❑ This is the third year
   ❑ Attended here before it was a charter school

Continued on back
☛

The next few questions relate to how you chose this charter school:

7. What were the reasons you decided to move your child from his/her former school to this charter school? (*Check ALL that apply*)

- ❑ This is the only school my child has attended
- ❑ Class sizes were too large at former school
- ❑ Child's self-esteem was low at former school academically
- ❑ Child was bored or under challenged at former school
- ❑ Concern for child's safety at former school
- ❑ Social environment/interaction with classmates was negative at former school
- ❑ Teachers/staff at former school not willing/able to help my child
- ❑ Nothing was really wrong with former school, this school better meets my child's needs
- ❑ Former school was too large
- ❑ Child was unhappy at former school
- ❑ Child was doing poorly
- ❑ Other (*please describe*):_____

8. What features first attracted you to this charter school? (Check all that apply)

- ❑ Class size
- ❑ School size
- ❑ Teaching methods
- ❑ Quality of teachers
- ❑ School's expectations of parents
- ❑ Discipline/dress code
- ❑ School's attitude toward parents
- ❑ Schedule/hours
- ❑ Education program/curriculum
- ❑ Philosophy towards education
- ❑ Safe environment
- ❑ Academic expectations for students
- ❑ School leadership
- ❑ School's attitude toward students
- ❑ Location
- ❑ Type of students
- ❑ Other services or special school features (for example, tutoring, after-school care) (*please describe*):_____

_____

9. Did any of the following items concern you or continue to concern you regarding charter schools in general or this charter school specifically?

a concern initially	**a continuing concern**	
❑	❑	Transportation to the school
❑	❑	The stability of the school's personnel
❑	❑	The stability of the school's leadership
❑	❑	The school's facility
❑	❑	Operational funding for the school
❑	❑	Funding for building or campus improvements
❑	❑	Lack of sports or extra-curricular programs
❑	❑	Other (*please describe*): _____

10. When you decided to seek options for your child's education, what kinds of schools did you explore? (*Check all that apply*)

- ❑ I looked into other regular (non-charter) public schools
- ❑ I looked at one charter school (the one I chose)
- ❑ I looked at various charter schools—how many did you explore: _____
- ❑ I looked into private schools
- ❑ I looked into parochial schools
- ❑ I looked into home schooling

11. When you looked into the charter school/s, what steps did you take? (*Check all that apply*)

- ❑ Called or dropped by the school for information/brochure
- ❑ Made an appointment to tour school
- ❑ Interviewed the principal/school director
- ❑ Met the teachers
- ❑ Observed a classroom in session
- ❑ Asked friends/neighbors about the school's reputation
- ❑ Looked for test scores or other information to compare this school with other schools
- ❑ Other (*please describe*): _____

_____

12. How did you find out about the school your child attends? (Check all that apply)

- ❑ A friend/relative/neighbor suggested it
- ❑ Saw it while walking/driving by
- ❑ Newspaper/TV/Radio
- ❑ Received a flyer in mail/at my door
- ❑ Staff at my child's former school suggested it
- ❑ We were referred by an agency, church, or other organization
- ❑ The school's reputation
- ❑ Some other way (*please describe*): _____

13. Before you found this charter school, did you send your child to another school that <u>did not</u> work out?

- ❑ Yes, other regular (non-charter) public schools—how many ____
- ❑ Yes, other charter schools—how many ____
- ❑ Yes, private schools—how many ____
- ❑ Yes, parochial schools—how many ____
- ❑ My child was home schooled—for how many years ____
- ❑ Yes, other: _____
- ❑ No

The next few questions relate to your satisfaction with your choice to send your child to this charter school.

14. Was anything about this charter school different then what you expected? Mark the choices that apply to you using:

1 = better than I expected; 2 = worse than I expected; 3 = different than what was communicated to me in the beginning

___ Class size
___ School size
___ Teaching methods
___ Quality of teachers
___ School's expectations of parents
___ Discipline/dress code
___ School's attitude toward parents
___ Schedule/hours
___ Education program/curriculum
___ Philosophy towards education
___ Safe environment
___ Academic expectations for students
___ School leadership
___ School's attitude toward students
___ Location
___ Type of students
___ Other services or special school features (for example, tutoring, after-school care)
(*please describe*): _____

15. Please describe any major changes that have occurred at the charter school over time and how it has affected your child/children or you?

16. What are the ways that this charter school communicates with you? (*Check all that apply*)

❑ Newsletters from the school: ❑ weekly ❑ monthly ❑ less often ❑ never
❑ Phone calls when there are problems
❑ Phone calls about upcoming events or positive comments about my child
❑ Parent teacher conferences
❑ Teacher has an open door policy—I can walk in any time
❑ Director has an open door policy—I can talk with him/her any time

These questions relate to how your experience and your child's experience at this school compares with the previous school he/she attended. <u>If your child has never attended another school, go to Question 23.</u>

17. Compared to your child's previous school:

	Better	Same	Worse
This school's attempts to communicate with parents are	❑	❑	❑
This school's response to me when I have a problem with the school/teacher is	❑	❑	❑
When I come to this school, the front office staff treats me	❑	❑	❑

18. Compared to your child's previous school, do you feel you have:

More	Same	Less	
❑	❑	❑	Opportunities to be involved
❑	❑	❑	Input into decisions made
❑	❑	❑	Communication with the school
❑	❑	❑	Been treated as a valued member of the school community

19. How is your child doing academically at this school compared to his/her previous school?

❑ Much better ❑ About the same ❑ Somewhat worse
❑ Somewhat better ❑ Much worse

20. How is your child's attitude about school/learning compared to his/her previous school?

❑ Much better ❑ About the same ❑ Somewhat worse
❑ Somewhat better ❑ Much worse

21. How does your child feel about his or her teachers compared to the previous school?

❑ Likes them much better ❑ Likes them about the same ❑ Likes them somewhat less
❑ Likes them somewhat better ❑ Likes them much less

22. How does your child get along with or like his/her classmates compared to the previous school?

❑ Much better ❑ About the same ❑ Somewhat worse
❑ Somewhat better ❑ Much worse

23. Will you be sending your child to this school next year?

❑ YES ❑ Not sure yet ❑ NO, this school is not meeting our needs
❑ NO, s/he is going on to the next grade level not available at this school

24. If your child will not be going to this school next year (for whatever reason), what kind of educational environment do you plan to sent him/her to?

❑ Another charter school ❑ A regular (non-charter) public school
❑ Parochial school ❑ Private school
❑ Undecided ❑ Other: _____

25. How does your child get to school?

- ❑ Walks/rides bike
- ❑ Drives a car
- ❑ Family drives him/her
- ❑ Parents carpool
- ❑ School provides transportation
- ❑ School district provides transportation
- ❑ Child takes city bus

26. If your child is in grades 7–12, how likely is it that he or she would finish high school if this school was not available?

❑ Very likely to finish ❑ Somewhat likely to finish ❑ Not likely to finish

27. Do you have any comments about your experience with charter schools or the changes in your child or changes in the school that you would like to share?

Please answer these last questions about your family.

28. How long has your family lived at your current address?

❑ Less than 1 year ❑ 1 to 2 years ❑ 2 to 4 years ❑ Over 4 years

29. What ages are your children that live with you? (*Circle all that apply*)

Infant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

30. Please indicate which category best describes your family's annual income (before tax):

- ❑ Less than $15,000
- ❑ $15,000 to $25,000
- ❑ $25,000 to $35,000
- ❑ $35,000 to $50,000
- ❑ $50,000 to $75,000
- ❑ $75,000 to $100,000
- ❑ Over $100,000
- ❑ Prefer not to answer

31. How many family members, including yourself, are supported by your family's income? _____

Thank you very much for completing this survey! If you would like to learn more about this study, contact Lori Mulholland or Lisa Peck at

Morrison Institute for Public Policy
School of Public Affairs
College of Public Programs
Arizona State University
P. O. Box 874405
Tempe, AZ 85287-4405
Phone: (602)965-4525
Fax: (602)965-9219

Appendix C

Focus Group Protocols

Teacher Focus Group Protocol
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation
Conducted by Morrison Institute for Public Policy, ASU
under contract with Arizona Department of Education

1. Tell us which school you teach at, what grade or classes you teach, and when you began teaching at the school.

2. Did you formerly teach the regular public system / has anyone taught at other charter schools?

3. How did you find out about this teaching job and did you seek out a charter school?

4. What was it about this school or charter schools in general that was attractive to you?

5. Was anything about your school a surprise or very different than you expected when you began?

6. Do you have any major concerns about charter schools in general or school specific concerns?

7. Why do parents send their children to your schools?

8. How do parents feel about your schools? Are they satisfied?

9. What are the biggest differences between charters and regular public schools in practice?

Student Focus Group Protocol
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation
Conducted by Morrison Institute for Public Policy, ASU
under contract with Arizona Department of Education

Background information

- What kind of school did you go to before this one?
- How did your family find out about this school?
- How long have you gone to this school?
- Any siblings in the school, too?
- Why did you change schools?

The goal for the next to questions is to learn about patterns of responses across students in all the schools participating in the student focus groups. What kind of issues emerge most often for students?

- What is different about being a student in this charter school than other schools you have attended?
- What do you like the most and the least about your charter school?
- Overall, are you glad you're at this charter school?
- If you could change something about this school, what would you change?
- If you had to pick one thing to change about public education, what would it be?

Parent Focus Group Protocol
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation
Conducted by Morrison Institute for Public Policy, ASU
under contract with Arizona Department of Education

1. Could you tell us how many children you have, how many are in charter schools, their grades, and how long you're children have been enrolled?

2. What kind of school did your child attend before the current one and why did you decide to send your children to these schools?

3. How did you decide to send your child to this school, how did you hear about the school?

4. When you were looking into charter schools, did you have any concerns about them. How about now?

5. Was anything about the school different (better or worse) than you expected?

6. How is the communication with the school?

7. How are problems resolved at your charter schools? Is this any different from your other experiences?

8. As a parent do you feel that you are treated any differently in this school (either opportunities for involvement, input into decisions, respect)

9. How well is your child doing? Compared to previous school?

10. What would happen if this option were not available to you and your child?

Administrator Focus Group Protocol
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation
Conducted by Morrison Institute for Public Policy, ASU
under contract with Arizona Department of Education

1. Introduce self & school
   how long been at the charter school
   how long school has been in existence

2. How did you become involved with this charter school?

3. Have you had administrative or teaching experience in the regular public system, or completely different careers?

Administrative:

4. What are the biggest challenges running a charter school?

5. What kind of school administration do you use and governance model?

Students and Parents:

6. Where do your students come from and why?

7. What does your school offer that parents can't find elsewhere?

8. How satisfied are parents?

Charters in General:

9. What are the biggest issues that worry you about charter schools?

10. Has special education presented any difficulties?

11. How do you view accountability to your sponsor?

12. Are charter schools providing parents and students with a viable educational choice?

Appendix D

Interview Protocols

Community Organization Interview Questions
Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation

1. How has your organization been involved with charter schools? Any partnerships? If so, how were they developed?

2. How has this involvement affected your organization? Has your organization or organizations like yours made adaptations in response to charters?

3. After having experience with charters, has your opinion changed about them?

4. Do you think that the introduction of charter schools has created unanticipated consequences?

Fiscal and Service-Provision Issues

5. Have charter schools impacted your organization fiscally -- e.g., additional staffing requirements, generating more revenue, etc.

6. From a community service perspective, do you view charters in any particular way?

Accountability and Choice:

7. In your role, what are the primary problems you have encountered in charter schools? Are these your primary concerns about charter schools?

8. How can these issues be resolved? Does the state play any role in your proposed solution?

Appendix E

Definitions—Parental Concern Categories

Categories Developed for Analysis of Parental Complaint Files

Definitions

Academics: Concerns relating to student achievement, curriculum, educational materials, or education program at the school.

Communications/Expectations: Concerns relating to 1) miscommunication (whether described as intentional or unintentional) on the part of the school or parent or related to the school or parent; 2) parent's or school's expectations of the other (whether stated, unstated, or implied); or claims of lack of responsiveness to parents concerns on part of school.

Discipline: Concerns relating to the specific nature of a student disciplinary method administered by staff or administration.

Extremism: Concerns relating to school personnel or school practices that convey an extreme, religious, or odd ideology.

General accountability: Concerns relating to accountability of the particular school or charter movement overall.

Health: Concerns regarding school health and hygiene of the school environment.

Inter-agency Issues: Concerns relating to problems between government or private entities working together, including records, students, and credit transfer problems.

Legal intervention: Concerns relating to the escalation of events or problems involving school and parent that results in police intervention or further legal proceedings.

Money/business practices: Concerns relating to fees or tuition charged to parents, possible financial malfeasance or incompetence, financial conflicts of interest, and administration/staff use of school funds.

Policy: Concerns relating to the existence or implementation of school policies regarding discipline, personnel, operating procedures, student safety procedures, transportation, supervision of students, or practicing within the parameters of the school's charter.

Public School Practice: Concerns relating to standard practices used in public schools, whether in statute or accepted practice, claims of civil rights violations or exclusionary practices.

Safety: Concerns relating to the safety of students at the school, prevention of violence against students or staff.

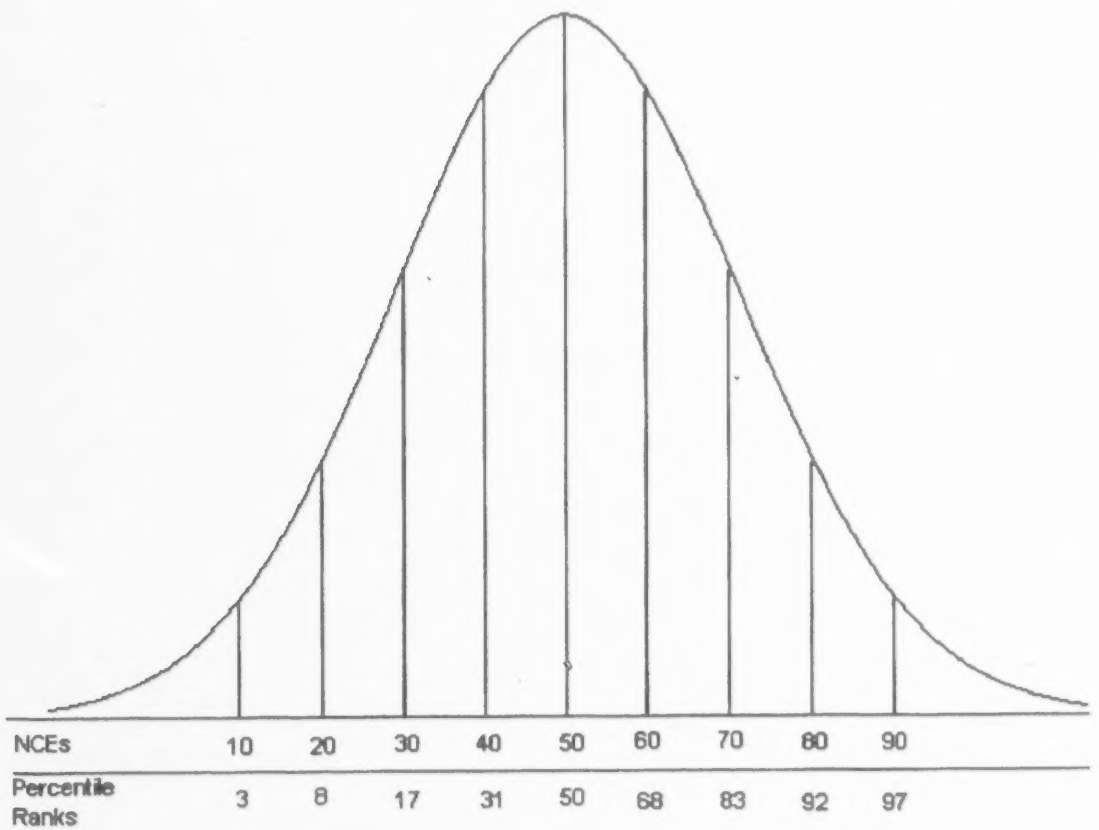
Special education: Concerns relating to any aspect of special education–the identification, administration, review, or adherence to student individual education plans, or any of the regulations surrounding special education at the school.

Staff/administration/governance issues: Concerns relating to professional conduct, treatment of students, parents, teachers or volatile relationships, abrupt or upsetting teacher dismissals, concerns about staff qualifications or performance, adequacy of staffing, high staff turnover, school's inflexibility or lack of recourse on issues.

Appendix F

Normal Curve Equivalent—Conversion Table

NCE	Percentile Rank
10	2.9
20	7.7
30	17
40	31
50	50
60	68
70	83
80	92.3
90	97.1



The shape above is a so-called "Normal" or "Bell" curve that represents the shape of the frequency of SAT-9 scores. As the reader can see, the NCE scores are distributed equally along the horizontal axis that reflects achievement. Percentile Ranks are not distributed equally. It is important to notice that gaining 10 NCE points at the bottom of the distribution (say from 20 to 30) is matched with a change of 11 percentile ranks. However, moving from 40 to 50 NCEs is matched with an increase of 19 percentile ranks. It is for this reason that NCEs are not directly translatable into percentile ranks, and should not be considered to be equivalent. An important implication of this scaling is that is is easier to move 5 percentile ranks in the middle of distribution that in the ends.

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FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Morrison Institute for Public Policy analyzes current and proposed public policies that are important to the future of greater Phoenix, the state of Arizona, and the nation. Its mission is to conduct research which informs, advises, and assists Arizona's state and community leaders. A unit in the School of Public Affairs (College of Public Programs) at Arizona State University, the Institute is a bridge between the university and the community.

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Morrison Institute for Public Policy
School of Public Affairs
College of Public Programs
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona 85287-4405
Phone: (602) 965-4525
Fax: (602) 965-9219
http://www.asu.edu/copp/morrison

87

Morrison Institute for Public Policy
School of Public Affairs
College of Public Programs
Arizona State University
PO Box 874405
Tempe, Arizona 85287-4405
(602) 965-4525 Fax (602) 965-9219
http://www.asu.edu/copp/morrison